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ABSTRACT

The text presents information gained from interviews with blind and physically handicapped children, their mothers, teachers, reading specialists, and librarians concerning reading patterns and library use. The book describes the difficulties handicapped children face in learning to use and enjoy such reading materials as braille books, large print books, and audio cassette recordings. The interviews focus on reading enjoyment and skills, library use, information needs and satisfaction with or improvements required in service from their own network library. Interviews with the children and their mothers provide information about the types of home environment that stimulate reading as well as the types of influences that limit reading. Teachers are asked about their use of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) and about their approach to reading in the classroom. Interviews with counselors focus on what handicapped children must overcome to become healthy, happy, and well-rounded. The importance of the preschool years to a handicapped child's development is also stressed. Reading specialists respond to questions about the effects of mainstreaming on reading. Staff librarians offer suggestions on improving the NLS program for print-handicapped children. (CL)

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Compiled and edited by

LESLIE ELDRIDGE

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I. PREFACE

> What vehicle do we have to transmit good values to children? Consider the media that the children are exposed to. They may watch "Sesame Street" if they are lucky, and perhaps some of the children's theater programs. More than likely they are opting to watch the Saturday cartoons and "Dukes of Hazzard." On most of the programs during prime time what values are transmitted? Where are the values that are going to open the children's eyes to hobbies or to experiences that they have to experience vicariously? Books, not microcomputers, can help transmit important information, values, and vicarious experiences to children. And if the parents and teachers are not willing to devote time to books and to discussions revolving around books, we end up with children who are burned out at age twelve, looking for outlets such as drugs or dropping out. They see no options for themselves. They have a very limited life view.
>
> —R. Ann Zinck, a reading specialist

On a typical day any library for blind and physically handicapped individuals will receive numerous telephone calls from adults asking about books. Many of these adults are avid readers and committed library users; some of them even use their local public libraries occasionally. The majority of them have not been blind since birth and they developed their interest in reading as sighted children and young adults. The library staff challenge with these adult readers is how to keep up with their demands for reading material.

The situation with blind and physically handicapped children is sadly different. A few exceptional children approach the library for the blind and physically handicapped and the public library the way their adult counterparts do, but most handicapped children are uneasy with libraries and reluctant about reading. They present long-standing enigmas to the librarians who would like to give them good service. The usual links between librarians and library-using children are not there. As a result, librarians for blind and physically handicapped individuals can easily become out of touch with the needs of their juvenile patrons and out of touch with the reading world of children. This latter point is important

because these young people are children first. Their handicap is a secondary characteristic.

In most libraries, services to blind and physically handicapped children, as provided through the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) network, have been a postscript added to an already demanding schedule of providing service to handicapped adults. The usual explanation for this is that the number of registered juvenile borrowers is small and the funding for children's programs is correspondingly low. One special education teacher provided another valid explanation: "The profession that serves blind children and adults has always been a practitioner profession rather than a research profession. So all tend to be busy maintaining the system rather than trying to figure out ways of making it better." Most librarians are too busy serving the people who are already on their mailing lists—the people who are constantly making demands—to take a long and objective look at services to children. Recent research efforts have been directed more toward developing technological aids than toward developing better library services for handicapped children.

As a former librarian in this field who daily vowed to "do something about children's services" but never quite knew where to start, I had my own suspicions about why the program for blind and handicapped children in our library was ineffective and I thought those suspicions could apply to our children's services nationwide.

I heard recurring stories about talking book machines gathering dust under children's beds. I suspected this was due to family situations and parents who were not involved in or did not understand library services for their children. The children's lack of reading skills and lack of interest in books also made me suspect that the schools were at fault. In addition, I thought that our exciting, media-filled world that has so little emphasis on reading was affecting handicapped and able-bodied children alike. And then each shade of disability seemed to require a different expert prescription, for which I had not been prepared by library school.

The NLS program for children has, since its inception, been treated much like the adult program. No panel of children's experts was convened decades ago to hammer out a unique, effective program for handicapped children, separate from the adult program. It was assumed, and there was no evidence to the contrary, that the materials and service delivery system that worked for adults would work for children. Yet the

system works only marginally for handicapped children, and the children it works for have strong support from parents and teachers.

In light of this it seemed time to begin a discussion of experts, by means of interviews presented in book form. NLS agreed. In an effort to investigate the handicapped child's situation and to provide an ecological model of the child's world on which to base future services, I spoke with the following groups of people: handicapped children and their mothers, special education teachers, child counselors, reading specialists, and librarians.

I asked print-handicapped children and their mothers about their use of libraries and about information needs that were or were not met by libraries. These children were library users and had interested parents, and these interviews provided clues as to the type of home environment that stimulates reading, as well as what preoccupations preclude reading and library use.

I asked teachers about their use of the NLS program and about their approach to reading in the classroom. Most teachers had suggestions for improving the program and gave insights into how the school setting is affecting both mainstreamed and nonmainstreamed handicapped children.

Interviews with counselors focused on what constitutes a happy, healthy, well-rounded child and what handicapped children must overcome to approach that state. The importance of the preschool years to a handicapped child's development was also discussed, with implications for library services to that age group. As one counselor said:

> Well-adjusted blind children have the expectation of independence and have positive experiences that prepare them for life. They have learned to trust other people, and their positive self-images make them want to grow up and become doers. In other words, well-adjusted blind children have good self-concepts so they are open to learning about the world. They are receptive and curious.

Reading specialists were included in this study because I felt strongly that many children, both handicapped and able-bodied, were not experiencing the excitement of reading at home or in school and, as a result, were not becoming the avid readers that adults now using libraries are. Since mainstreaming is so widespread, it seemed appropriate to address

the reading issue as one of the areas of similarity between handicapped and able-bodied children.

I also talked to staff librarians (and in one case a paraprofessional) at four network libraries, each doing something that seemed to be for handicapped children. I asked about the nature of the libraries' juvenile readership and about the libraries' programs and I requested recommendations for changing the NLS program for print-handicapped children.

This project was an attempt to characterize the handicapped juvenile library user and nonuser and to promote some new ideas for serving them among librarians in the NLS network. This project was also aimed at providing a sanction for already conceived ideas and programs and a solid frame of reference for program planning and materials development. While I investigated the world of these children, I was subconsciously looking for one of two things: an invitation for librarians to become further involved or a warning for librarians to keep out. I expected to hear either that librarians are doing the best they can or that they can do much more for children and they had better start soon. The consensus was that librarians could be doing more to encourage blind and physically handicapped children to read. Toward this end, the people who were interviewed made specific suggestions, including changing library materials, equipment, and methods.

I want to thank all of those people who participated in the interviews. They are a thoughtful, good-humored group whose concern for blind and physically handicapped children was inspiring. I also want to thank NLS for allowing me to open up this needed forum.

Leslie Eldridge
San Francisco, California

II. Children and Mothers

All of the children interviewed are active NLS library users, recommended for this project by their regional or subregional librarians and in all but two cases they were interviewed with their mothers present. This parent-child dynamic reveals itself in the interviews as a primary reason the children were library users.

The children were asked to talk informally about why they like to read and what their favorite books were. They were asked to talk about reading at home and reading at school to see where they got the most encouragement for reading. When the children were receptive they also talked about other aspects of their lives that helped put their interest in reading in perspective. They were then asked what they thought of libraries in general and their talking-book libraries in particular. Finally, given a hypothetical million dollars, they were asked to imagine their ideal children's library.

The mothers were asked to talk about their children's use of the talking-book library and their own degree of satisfaction that the children's reading needs were being met. Then they were urged to talk about their own information needs, as parents of handicapped children. Their attitudes toward reading and libraries were explored, as were the pros and cons of "mainstreaming" and how it affected their children's lives and free time. Finally they were asked to suggest improvements for the NLS system as well as in the information and referral setup for parents of handicapped children.

Teng Phasouk (girl, age six), who has low vision
Honolulu, Hawaii

My mom, my sister-in-law, and my big sister's sons don't speak English. They don't read because we don't have any books in Laotian.

I know some Laotian words and I know most of the English words. I want to know all of the English words! That's why I read. I forget some of the words in Laotian. My sister knows English like I do.

I like any kind of book, if it isn't junk. Junk books are books that you don't have any fun with, boring books. I read *Strawberry Shortcake*; that's a color book that you put stamps in. And *Alphabets in the Garden* is ordinary, not boring. And *Yes I Can* and *Three Little Bears*—and I

forgot the other one. I read the books at school, too, but I read quietly at school because that is a quiet time for us.

My friend Lisa and I go to two libraries, the Waikiki Library [school library] and the other library [Hawaii Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped].* I go to the library where they had a party—the blind library. The blind library is the largest one that I've been to. Lisa, Brandy, Guywood, Masumi, and I go to the blind library every Tuesday.

It is hard to find the books you want in the school library. We have to find our own books and take out the cards; if they don't have cards, we can't take them. We have to sign our name, room, and teacher on the card, put it back in the book, and give it to the checker, who gives it back to us when it is checked out.

But the blind library is different. We can have two books. We go where there is a card and take out a card; then we sign our name, write down our room number, our book's name, and the name of the school, and give it back. The checkers check the card and give us a new card, and then we take the book.

I had fun at the blind library. Twice we had a party. In December Lisa had a birthday, so we went to the library and had birthday cake, ate cookies, and had presents. The other time was when we had our names on our clothes. My class did a show, dancing and playing instruments. Lisa and I were the only ones who played most of the instruments. Lisa and I even danced the hula at the blind library.

Sometimes when the teacher has time she will read to us, but today she cannot read a book. Today we are going to work; then comes play—and sometimes reading. We have lunch and then films. Brandy, Masumi, and Guywood don't have films. Only Lisa and I.

Every time we go to the blind library we girls want Charlie Brown and other Peanuts books, but all the Charlie Brown books are in small print. It can take me a week to read books with print that small. I wish all the books that were in small print could be made in large print so we could have more large-print books to choose from.

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*Teng and Lisa both read large print. The Hawaii Regional Library is located next door to the public library, so both girls stop at the public library for large-print books before they visit the "blind library." At the early reading levels, almost all print books are in large print, so the girls can also use the library at the elementary school.

Brandy Peiper (girl, age ten), who has low vision
Brandy Peiper (girl, age ten), who has low vision
Honolulu, Hawaii

We've got a whole stack of books at school; we also have a folder, and for each book we read, we write down the name of the book, when we started it, and when we finished. Doctor Seuss is my favorite. When we went to the blind library, there was a party for Doctor Seuss because it was his birthday. We had cake and ice cream.

Sometimes I read the newspaper. It is easy to learn how to read. Reading is good, too, because you get to learn more about people, art, cars, all sorts of things. I read large print. Lorna teaches us where the stacks of large-print books are. The blind library has a tape and a record player and all sorts of things. If I finish my two library books, I get another one from the stacks. I feel happy at the library.

I read at school, after recess. The teachers ask us questions about the books; sometimes we answer them and sometimes we just talk about the books. I wish we had more large-print books. And we've got a tape recorder at school. Sometimes we sit down after lunch and listen to tape books and records. It is fun when they read to you because then you don't have to read yourself.

Lisa Connor (girl, age six), who has low vision
Honolulu, Hawaii

When you read, you can be alone awhile without having to read to other people. You don't have to read with other people; you can do it almost anywhere you want. Books can be interesting, too, like books about the sun, books about the universe. I also like funny books, like *Wacky Wednesday*. Another funny one was when Amelia Bedelia sat on the baby. I mostly go to the regular library, where I went yesterday. But sometimes I can't find the books I want, so I have to go to the blind library. While we are waiting for the boys, I ask Lorna [the librarian] if she has the book I want or if she will have the book. If there are two books I like in the regular library and the print is large enough, I get them. Yesterday I wanted *The Headless Horseman* but the print was too small, really teeny print, so I couldn't read it. I asked Lorna to see if the library has it in large print. I can't get *The Headless Horseman* in small print and use the magnifier to read it. Right now I am using the magni-

fier to read another book, a very long book that I am never going to

fier to read another book, a very long book that I am never going to
finish before the end of the year.

I listen to tape books sometimes, and I like to pick out my own tapes and records. But sometimes my Mom and I can't make it all the way down to the library. I have some tapes of my own, though. Sometimes I can't find the tape to go with the book. I tried listening to the Bobbsey Twins from Lorna's library, but it was for older girls. Maybe in a couple of years. The Bobbsey Twins is a mystery, like the Hardy Boys. Masumi likes the Hardy Boys.

Sometimes teachers read books to us, but we have to follow along. Mostly I read at home, sometimes in the living room. My mom reads a lot. I don't have brothers and sisters, but I feel as though I have sisters because I'm involved in Brownies. Mostly we make things in Brownies and we don't read books. Teng reads books sometimes in school, but I don't think she reads at home.

When I'm my mom's age I might not read much, because I might want to be a Brownie or Girl Scout teacher. Then I could make kids feel happy. I'll be very busy then, but I guess I could read in the morning.

I think the best library would be one full of toys and books and no grown-up books, only big-print books and stuffed animals. The library would have a backyard the kids could go out and play in; then if it started raining they could come and play inside.

I was thinking of writing a book called *A Day in Santa Claus Land*, in big print. All these kids go down to the South Pole where Santa lives and they have a good time with Santa around Christmas time.

I'm going to spend this Christmas at Gung-Gung's, in Silver Spring, Maryland. I can play in the snow. All my relatives live there; we're the only ones of our family who live here. If school is open, we're going to go see my old teachers where I used to go to school. The library in Maryland had only one toy—a climbing bear. Zoop!

Sometimes when I read my eyes get sore. I think the best thing in the world is snow, then television. You can learn from television shows and you can see the pictures. With television you don't have to read so much.

Masumi Scherb (boy, age ten) who is congenitally, totally blind
Honolulu, Hawaii

I like science books and space books. I read *How Airplanes Fly* and *Spaceships of the Mind*, which was about different spaceships and different planets and how long it would take for us to go to the planets. I found out yesterday in *The Human Body* that your intestines are eighteen feet long, but they are coiled up. And your brain is folded so if you take it out it's real big. And the blood vessels could go for something like a thousand miles. A thousand miles of blood vessels! And there are two hundred and some bones in your body. *Wonders of the Human Body* is another book I read. You can learn things from reading. Every day I read a half hour at home, sometimes an hour.

I think I was four or five when I learned to read. I like both braille and tapes. I listened to *Mutiny on the Bounty* on tape. I like to read about ships and to play the piano.

I like all the books and tapes to choose from at the library. I learned how to use the card catalog and how to find different books there. We had a Christmas party at the library; we had lunch, with singing and presents.

I like the tapes because I can just listen to them—I don't have to read them. The long books I want on tape.

Guywood De La Cruz (boy, age twelve), who is adventitiously, totally blind
Honolulu, Hawaii

I don't like to read books much—only if the books are interesting. Horror books are good. At home I've got a lot of regular-print books I got from the school library; I got some real spooky ones like *The Headless Roommate and Other Tales of Terror*. I tell my nephew or my cousins to read them to me; I like it when they read to me.

Every other week we go to the blind library. It is fun because you get to go in the stacks and look for books. We also get to borrow tapes, records, tape recorders, and record players. I was doing my outline about snakes, spiders, and other outcasts—meaning other bugs and insects—there yesterday. I didn't finish it so I got busted. My teacher scolded me just for not doing that horrible thing.

I like to create stuff—that's my hobby. I go up to my room, like on Saturday or Sunday, and make something, maybe out of cardboard. I like cowboys, army, fighting, acting, all of that. It is more fun than reading, and more relaxing, too.

It's boring to read braille books. If they had more stories about prehistoric animals, the books would be more interesting. Those tapes that I get from the library, I listen to some of them. They're good. They send me any one they want and I don't send it back until I've listened to the whole thing.

My mother works, my dad is retired, and I have two younger sisters.

Mrs. Betty Linsinbigler (adoptive mother of three visually handicapped children) and **Tuan Linsinbigler** (boy, age 19), the oldest of the children, who lost both eyes and part of one arm during the Vietnam War
Trenton, New Jersey

Mrs. Linsinbigler: Our Vietnamese son Tuan, a senior in high school, is the oldest of our three visually handicapped children, and he is the biggest user of the library. Tuan is totally blind. He has artificial eyes and is missing part of one arm, so he is multiply handicapped. When he was ten years old, a bomb exploded in front of him, blowing out his eyes and blowing off his arm. He had to learn braille in Vietnam, plus everything else you need to know as a blind person in that country; then when he came here, he had to learn a whole new culture as well.

Tuan is in a category all by himself. He has had so many things to learn. There were a lot of emotional, traumatic things going on inside him all the time that he was trying to adapt to American life and learn what he needed to know. But Tuan is a good student; he gets mostly A's and B's, and last week he was made an honorary member of the National Honor Society.

Tuan is an unbelievable guy and he has been quite determined, but there have been days when he would come home and say, "I can't do it another day. I am quitting school tomorrow." Tuan is older than most high school kids, and he knew he could quit any time he wanted to. I remember sitting up one night until almost two o'clock talking with him about quitting school. He just couldn't take it anymore. We sat and talked, and finally his dad said, "Look. You owe it to your teachers, you owe it to everybody who has busted their tails to get you this far to at

least give them the benefit of the doubt and keep going for this month. Just this month." Do you know what had discouraged him so much? It was a history exam. He had been scared to death to take it, but in the end he got a B+ on it.

Tuan has matured a lot because of experiences like that. Now he realizes that nobody else puts the kind of pressure on him that he puts on himself. It used to be, "It has to be an A." Now it's, "The best I can do." We've always told all our kids, "If that D was the best you could do today, then that's okay. But if you could have done better, then a D better not be the mark you get. If you got that mark because you were goofing off or watching television or because you didn't do your homework, then we don't want to hear about it. But if that's the best you can do, with an honest effort, that's good enough." And that has been our approach, especially with Tuan.

Our daughter Holly is twelve. She has no vision in one eye and only peripheral vision in the other and she has juvenile glaucoma. A typical twelve-year-old, she wants to be just like everybody else and she doesn't like the idea that she is different. She has good enough vision to read print, so she really doesn't enjoy the tapes and records very much. When she was younger she read the children's tapes, but now she is very much into reading print and very proud of the fact that she can read it well, even the tiniest print. She does, however, enjoy the parties at the regional library; the social part of the library she enjoys even more than the books.

Holly's younger sister, Wendy, is nine years old and had multiple cataracts when she was a baby. Now she wears very thick, heavy bifocals. She also has a very bad nystagmus, which means that she cannot wear contact lenses in the near future. Wendy, too, is a fine reader and she is still reading large print a good deal. She even sits down and reads the dictionary, now that we have a large-print dictionary. The dictionary fascinates her because the words are big enough for her to really see, and she just loves the accent marks and things.

Most of the books from school are still in large print—third-graders still have a lot of large print. Next year, however, we are going to have a problem. The last time we went to the public library we didn't see many large-print books for children. Now she reads those Golden Books over and over. She just got her first big comic book, with large enough print that she can take a magnifier and look at it. She uses one of those

small magnifiers. She goes along reading the speaking parts, and thinks it is great. She reads that comic book over and over.

Wendy does not like listening to tapes and she is very proud of her print-reading ability, just like her sister. She is tops in her reading group in school. But she also loves the social things that go along with being part of the Library for the Blind. When the girls were little, they really got into the print-braille books because my husband, Art, who is blind, could read to them. My husband and Tuan both listen to tapes, and Wendy and Holly would listen together when they were younger, but as soon as Holly stopped listening and started reading print, so did Wendy.

All our children are adopted. My husband is a seventh-generation blind person, and we agreed that we would never have biological children, because we knew that we would pass the blindness on to them. Adopting handicapped children is very different from being their natural parents. We were psychologically prepared, the same way we are prepared for the day when Tuan wants to go back to Vietnam to see where his parents are. That is a foregone conclusion. In addition, we were familiar with blindness before we adopted the children. My husband says that he views blindness mainly as an inconvenience, and I think the fact that we accept blindness has helped our children adjust to it. The children also are influenced by the fact that my husband has an extremely good job and is a very satisfied person. His example shows the children that being handicapped doesn't mean being unhappy or being an outcast. All right, so you have a handicap, big deal—that's the way Art handles it, and his attitude influences the rest of us. Our friends, most of whom are visually handicapped, act as our extended family and as role models for the children. And role models are extremely important.

One of the things that Tuan had to be talked out of was his "Yes, sir. No, sir" attitude; he had been indoctrinated that mother, father, and teacher are always right. Shortly after Tuan arrived here, we asked a Vietnamese gentleman to visit. We thought it would be good for Tuan, but it proved to be the worst thing we could have done. This man came in and proceeded, in Vietnamese, to lay down the law to Tuan. Here is this kid, just barely in the house, stuck with a mom and dad he didn't particularly want, and wanting to be back in Vietnam with his own family, and this visitor puts all that Oriental pressure on Tuan. It was unbelievable. It took a long time before Tuan was able to accept the fact that he wasn't perfect and that there was nothing wrong with his not being

perfect. He learned that he could get an imperfect grade, be an imperfect person, but still be a worthwhile person.

When Tuan first started school I was so pleased that he had some very dedicated people helping him. They really gave it all they had, even though they had only two months' notice that Tuan was going to be in the school system and they had no concept of what he knew or what he was capable of doing. He was, in fact, dumped on the school system. The school had no time to prepare, no time to choose any special teachers; we were very fortunate and thankful that we got the people we did, because they had to have a positive impact! If they had not, they could have turned Tuan against everything here.

But no one can match the counselor we had from the Commission for the Blind. The children's adjustment, my adjustment, my learning to work with the kids and with the educational system and the library—all depended on the help the counselor gave me. Ignorant parents walking around feeling guilty about their handicapped child had better find a good counselor, because the counselor is the all-important source of information for parents and children. I have never lacked information and neither have my children. Why? Because the counselor was always there, no matter what hour of the day or night. She has viewed every one of her clients as a special responsibility. Every time something new came on the market, whether it was an aid or something else, we would get a copy of the brochure in the mail with a note: "I think this might be something for Tuan to look into," or "I think maybe Wendy might like this."

I knew absolutely nothing in the beginning, aside from the fact that I had a blind husband, and the counselor was there to help when we first got each of the children. She was the one who recommended nursery school for the girls. She was the one who first said how important it was that the children not be allowed to grow up feeling handicapped, and that they should be pushed out of the nest. Whenever I had a problem, and believe me I had many, she was always available. That is not true of any of the other counselors; she was really an exception. Because of her I knew my rights from the beginning. I knew, for example, that I had a right to go to the School Board if I didn't like the way the school was treating my children. I think that libraries are great, and great for a lot of things other than reading. I think the festivals and the nonreading aspects of the library are important; these aspects are not generally

associated with libraries for the blind. Reading also is fantastically important. I have always enjoyed reading, and two of my husband's favorite pastimes are reading and listening to the radio. I really think that blind people's involvement in the library is important. I think that blind children who are mainstreamed in regular schools miss some of the social activities that they would get if they were going to a school for the blind. I'm not necessarily talking about children who have as much sight as my daughters; I'm talking about children who are partially sighted, who are in what my husband calls "never-never land," children who are neither blind nor sighted. They can put on an act about being able to see, yet no one around them knows how well they can see. As a result, neither sighted people nor blind people know how to handle them.

Social events for handicapped kids like these are important. The pinata party at the library was so much fun! It is a shame there were so few kids participating, but that's another story. There should be more hands-on experiences like that for visually handicapped children. My husband has always wanted to have a hands-on museum of stuffed animals, to give blind people the opportunity to feel an eagle, for instance. How many times does a blind person get to examine a bird? People don't pet peacocks, so how do you describe what a peacock looks like to a blind person? I think this is extremely important. We went to the Corning Glassworks one time where marvelous crystal is on display. When the hostess found out that my husband couldn't see, she brought the United Nations punch bowl down for him. It is valued at around $50,000. On the sides of the punch bowl are representative carvings from every country that is a U.N. member. My husband was able to take his time and examine it thoroughly. You should have seen the spectators! These pieces of crystal sit on black velvet surrounded by signs saying, "Do Not Touch." There should be more hands-on experiences like that, and libraries would be perfect places to have them. We really enjoyed the statuary at the regional library, and during the festival someone was always reading the braille labels on the statues.

Because Tuan always gets good marks, his schoolmates sometimes made snide comments about all the hours of supplemental instruction that he gets. He has even felt that he was getting too much professional help. The basic research for a term paper would be his, but he tended to think that he was not putting as much into it as the other kids did. Like-

wise, when he got into the National Honor Society, he felt that he was being given membership because he was blind. There is heavy competition for induction into the society and he thought that he hadn't competed. But they gave him membership on the basis of what he had accomplished, considering the fact that he had a few things stacked against him to begin with. It takes a lot more work for him to get an A.

I know the hours that Tuan spends going over and over material, when a child with good eyes could look at a particular paragraph and find the answer immediately. I know the time that is spent reading braille, taking notes in braille, and then turning the braille into print so that the teacher can read it. Why should Tuan have to do double work like that? True, he has taped most of his classes, but then he has to come home and review all of the day's tapes, which could take him literally two full school days to do.

What does this situation create in the child? Anger. So if a blind kid can find a way of getting away from that pressure for a while, he is going to do it. Chances are his outlet isn't going to be reading, after doing all of that reading for school. If the child has halfway decent vision he will turn to television. And if he doesn't have halfway decent vision, perhaps he'll be like Tuan and take up weightlifting and running.

Incidentally, that brings up another of my pet peeves with the school system: how they handle physical education for handicapped kids. I remember the years when Tuan was singled out and had to do situps in the corner with a girl while the other boys were outside playing soccer, basketball, and football. Do you know it has taken Tuan all these years to get the school to let him work out on the track and use the weight room? He spends his money to go to a private health club so that he can lift weights when he wants to.

I think the reason that more children don't come to events in the library is that their parents don't want to be bothered. Yet, parents who have come to the library programs have enjoyed themselves. It also seems that the programs have happened to fall on absolutely gorgeous days, and when the weather is fine, families make other plans. Events at the library are a new concept, though, and will take time to catch on. But attendance will eventually improve because people who have come to the library have fully enjoyed themselves. All the activities for children at this regional library are new—we never had things like a library festival before! Heavens! I've been around the library for a number of

years, before I even had the children, and I don't remember any of these things being offered. During those days the library was a place you called or wrote to to order books. It was an inanimate, way-over-there type thing. But now, if it's a question of taking the children to programs at our local public library or of going a longer distance to the library for the blind to give the children hands-on experience, I would put myself out to go to the Library for the Blind.

Tuan: In school we go to the library sometimes, and we see movies in class, but we don't do much reading. And since I'm going to public school there are no braille books for me. But at home I try to read as much as I can. I'm one of those people who likes to learn the spelling of words, even though I don't know the definitions. Right now I read a lot of books that I don't even understand, but by reading them I learn spelling. If the word is hard, usually I don't bother to look it up, because there are so many hard words. If I could use a print dictionary I'd flip through the pages and look up the words, but I have a braille dictionary and it takes me much longer. If I read a book that has twenty or thirty hard words on each page it gets boring, so I read childish books like *Jack and Jill.* Elementary books explain things better.

I like swimming, lifting weights, and running. I belong to the New Jersey Track Team for the Blind and I'll be attending a nationwide track meet soon. I don't read books on these sports, but when the radio has sports and fitness programs I listen, and when I go to the health club I hear people talk about things. I think the movie "Chariots of Fire" caused many people to become interested in jogging.

I don't really read that much, but I have started reading a new magazine called *Health Magazine.* Books on jogging or exercise are really too technical for me; I don't read the books, I just do the exercise. It is a way of relaxing for me. Today I did a couple of quarter-mile sprints and ran around the track to prepare for the race. When you run in a race you run all out, because there is no more tomorrow.

Braille reading is so tedious and takes so long that it is hard to sit and read. It takes much, much longer to read a braille book. If I weren't doing anything else, like going to school, I'd probably read a lot more. Right now the only book I spend a lot of time with is the dictionary.

Listening to books is faster than reading braille, but I don't think I learn as much from it. When I listen I don't learn how to spell, I don't learn how to write, and I don't learn punctuation. I guess I'm a perfec-

tionist. In order for me to be able to write correctly I have to know certain rules. If I listen to a cassette book, it doesn't teach me any of those rules. I get the ideas from the stories, I hear sentences, but I don't know where the commas or periods are so I feel that I am missing a lot. I used to have my sight and I used to read print textbooks. Now I read braille textbooks. The braille system helps, but there is so much to memorize and it is so disorganized.

There are a few things that I really like about the library, but first I'd better say what I don't like. (1) Sometimes when I don't get a book I've ordered, the library staff tells me, "Well, we sent it out to you." I don't know who to blame. I can go and pick up books in person, but what if I lived fifty miles away? (2) Sometimes the library sends me books that I don't ask for, and I don't like that. When I first came here they sent a lot of things. Out of curiosity I listened to the books, but I hadn't asked for them. (3) And sometimes I send back books and the library says the books weren't returned.

I would like for the library to return to the mailing system that uses address cards with holes in the corners to tell users whether we've turned the cards over or not. Now, every time I want to turn the card over I have to ask somebody, "Is this thing turned over or not?" I think that the other system was better. It is really important to us.

I definitely prefer cassette tapes to talking book discs because so many people abuse the discs. When I get a record that ten people have listened to ahead of me, the records are usually scratched. I'm not saying that once in a while I don't accidentally scratch a record myself, but if too many people have used the records, you hear cracks and pops and miss a lot of what is going on. If I complain will anyone hear me? I think the library should clean and check the records before sending them out. Many people don't know how to send damaged records back to the library. Sometimes when I get a book—let's say there are supposed to be fourteen records in one story—I find that one or two records are missing. That makes me really angry. In addition, every time I walk across the floor the record skips and I lose my place. It's difficult to pick up where I left off. It is easier to do that with the cassette tapes.

I think it is really important to have displays at the library of the aids and appliances that are available for blind people to use. I don't know how exploratory other blind kids are, but I want to know what is going on around me. If I go to the library and find a device that is good, I

want to buy it. At least I'd like to be able to examine something before I buy it. Usually I buy things through catalogs, or when I hear about them. I'd like to examine samples of as many products as possible. For instance, I didn't know there was a talking thermometer! And a lot of blind people don't know what kinds of magazines are available. I just found out about some of them; if I had known about the magazines five or six years ago, I would be a good reader by now because I like magazines better than books. If everybody goes to the library at once for a demonstration of a machine, like the Kurzweil machine, however, each person isn't really going to have time to use the machine or really investigate the display.

This summer I'll be working at the library. One of the librarians there wants me to listen to a college course on tape and evaluate it. If I have some free time during lunch or something, then I can try out some of the machines there and see what I can learn from some of the displays.

School work has been hard for me. When I came to this country, I didn't know the language or the customs, and blind people didn't have to attend a public school in Vietnam. I had to learn braille when I was eleven or twelve years old. Before, when I read print, I could glance over a page in a minute; now I can't glance through a braille page, I have to read the whole thing. There is one other visually impaired kid in the school, but I don't really communicate with him.

In school the teachers don't give me enough notice about what books we are going to be reading and by the time they get to the assignment I'm not ready. I think teachers should give the blind student two or three weeks' notice so he can order the book and then start reading it. With that lead time I could either be right alongside my classmates or ahead of them, and when we discuss the book I could participate. If I knew that the teacher was going to show a movie in class, maybe I could get the book on which the movie is based and read it ahead of time because I'm not going to get everything that everyone else is from a movie. People may explain it to me, but I miss a lot! When our class saw the movie about Anne Boleyn, I missed so much that I had to get a book about her and read it twice. It's hard when you have to write an essay or test on the movie because when you don't see it but only read the story, you don't remember it as well.

In one class we read *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and I couldn't get the braille book in time. The class read it aloud but there were so

many kids in the class, each one playing a different part, that I didn't know who was saying what. On the cassette book, in contrast, it will say, "Joe said" or "Eileen said." But in this class I said to myself, "I'm just going to daydream and forget about this. I'm getting more and more mixed up as they are reading." Often I ask the teacher, "Right now I have some free time. Are we going to read a novel next?" But I really have to go after the teachers, and most of them say to me, "Oh, don't worry. We'll have time to do it." Usually by the time we get to it, it's too late.

I know a lot about history because I've read in that area. I also listen to the news program "All Things Considered," which covers a lot of history, and that's how I get my information. We have current events in school and I can answer about 80 percent of the questions asked in class. The answers to those questions will stick in my head for years and years. I also like to listen to old radio shows like "Gunsmoke" and "The Green Hornet." Those shows are easy to understand because every action is described to the listener. When I am watching the television and somebody picks up a gun, I don't even know about it.

One very important thing I wish the library had is a collection of maps, braille or raised maps. I really need maps of the world; in geography I have nothing to look at. I think the Library for the Blind should have a braille map of the United States, or a globe, or something that we can look at. I don't know how to express how important maps are. I feel very, very angry about the situation now. Geography is a part of current events. Where *are* the Virgin Islands? Where is Ethiopia? I know it's around Africa, but where is it exactly? Someone can show me on a printed map, but there are so many countries that I don't know what is east and west, north and south.

One thing the Library for the Blind did have was a scale model of the White House. It made my day just to see the relationship between the size of a person and the size of the White House. If you're blind, it is hard to understand the sizes of buildings; you can't climb up on the roof of a building and feel how big it is.

If I were a millionaire, the first thing I would do is set up a huge library and fill it with many things that are practical for blind people to know about. This huge library would be open to anyone who wanted to come to it, but it would be especially for blind people. It wouldn't benefit just the blind though, but all people whose eyesight is failing. And

since we are living longer, and many eye problems come with old age, there will be more people to use the library in the future.

I would like to improve braille reading. Instead of reading braille books we could read by computer chip; the braille would be sent to our computers and we could read at home.

I tape all my classes now, because by the time I decide whether to take something down in braille or not, the teacher is already ten sentences ahead of me. I have a tremendous box full of school tapes; some of the math tapes even go back to the eighth grade. I love math, so I want to listen to the tapes again, because when I listen a second time I learn more.

School can be discouraging at times. I just feel behind everybody else. During the movies I just sit there like a zombie; the teacher doesn't allow anyone to talk and explain the movie to me. I'm missing a lot because I can't see. I'd like to be able to leave the classroom and take a stroll down the hallway or something. If I knew more about computers, I would try to figure out a way to get blind students to know exactly what is going on in class. Whatever the teacher is writing on the board would go right to the blind student's hand. The computer would automatically transfer what was being written on the board to my hand. If I could just get to the right computer person, I know this technique could be developed.

A lot of the smart kids in the high school are wasting their time while they could be doing something useful for the blind students, like reading to us in study hall or something. I didn't know that the National Honor Society was supposed to help kids who need help in their classes. I just found this out, and I'm leaving school this year. The Society's pledge is to help others, and they do it, but you have to ask for the help. Blind people are so limited. I walk around and I feel out of place because I am one out of three hundred kids. It just so happens that I am one of those in-between people. I can be nice or I can be mean. I have had fights with some of the other students. One kid I fought with in class said to me afterward that he would be honored to walk with me down the hall. But sighted students don't understand blind students, and we don't understand them. I think it would help if some of the teachers in public school would find out more about blind children.

I'd like to see the library have a real Model T car or an airplane on display that blind people could sit in. What are these things like? We

don't know. I lived in the country in Vietnam and there were many things that I never experienced when I could see. There are some things that I just can't picture, and it would be good if these things could be on display for us.

I'll probably work in a vending stand when I get out of high school, though I'm not really sure. "Senior insecurity" is going around.

Mrs. Marty Coe and her daughter **Heidi Coe** (age thirteen), who has cerebral palsy
Athens, Georgia

Heidi: I just gobble up talking books. I have one mouth for eating and another for books. In the school year I read, but I have homework and clubs so I don't have much time. On vacation I can read all I want. In a week I probably read about three books, but it depends on how long the books are. I get love stories and stories about girls who are pretty and go to proms. Books about teenagers are my favorite books. I just read a book about a girl my age, and she was really mad because girls weren't allowed to take tennis at school. Then her brother had baseball practice so she took over his paper route for a while. She really wanted to have the paper route for herself, but only boys could have paper routes.

I like cassettes much better than records. With the tape recorder, if something comes up while you're reading you can just stop and then start it again when you are ready, at the point where you left off. It is hard for me to handle the needle and the records with my disability. I read any time I can get a free moment. I just like to lie on my bed and read; it's my favorite hobby, I think.

I read in school, too, for pleasure and for homework. For homework, all my textbooks—my social studies and science—are on tape, so I can listen to them. I have some print books, too, so that I can look at the pictures sometimes. I can't write, so I listen to questions in class and then make up my answers in my head; I just talk about them to myself. I tell the teacher the answers while everybody else writes them down in a copy book. Next year my teacher might want me to record my answer on tape; I'll just have to see. I'm going to a new school in Raleigh, North Carolina. We're moving in July and it's such a hassle. I hate packing up and saying goodbye to friends.

But they do have a talking book center in Raleigh. I said to Mom, "I will not go to a town that doesn't have a talking book center!"

I would like to have more classics on tape; as I said, I can't use records. I want more classics for school, and just more good books, better books.

I started reading talking books seven or eight years ago. When Mom and Dad were at the regular library, they saw talking books there and said, "Aha! Heidi would really enjoy these!" I liked the books when I first heard them, but I like them much more now. A hobby is like a friend. It has to grow and grow. I have more of a hobby now. My friends read books, too, but they don't read talking books. Their hobby is not reading. I guess I have read much more than they have. I took a test earlier and my reading was on the ninth-grade level. That doesn't mean that I can work at the ninth-grade level, but I test at the ninth-grade level because I have read a lot and listened a lot. But there is so much I don't know. If I come across a word I don't know, sometimes I ask Mom, sometimes I just figure it out by myself—but that doesn't happen a lot.

I would like a talking book center that had all the books that are available in print so that whenever I wanted a certain book the talking book center would already have it on tape. When I come in here and ask for a story I want to read, the staff will often say to me, "I'm sorry, Heidi, that's on disc, or in large print, or we just don't have it on tape." Every time a new book comes out it should be recorded, automatically.

I used to go to the regular library to look at the pictures in the print books or maybe get out a research book, or to help Mom.

I would also like an encyclopedia or a dictionary in talking books so that blind people can come and look up anything they needed.

I have one teacher who keeps school exciting and makes me like to be in her class—not all the time but sometimes—and she just makes me want to learn. To make teaching exciting, you've got to care about your students.

I also know one lady, a neighbor, who is almost blind. She has some disease. Nobody knows what it is, but she is a fighter. She goes all over the country seeing doctors, which is just amazing. She is an inspiration for me.

I've thought about what I want to be, but frankly I just don't know. It would be neat to be a writer. Sometimes when I finish a book, I make

up my own ending. Not really make up the ending, but just think about what comes next, what the character is going to do next. I play an "if" game, like so many people play all the time. What *if* she didn't die? If I didn't do that, then I wouldn't be in this situation. I always say after a test when I get a low grade, "But if I'd studied harder." But "if" games don't get you anywhere. They teach you a lesson, though, so next time a big test comes up, I know to study harder.

Sometimes I read stories about girls with disabilities. Two of my most favorite books are *With Love from Karen* and *The Other Side of the Mountain*. These two books told about how the girls coped with their disabilities. I like stories about disabled people. I can sympathize with them, with people like Karen, who comes from a really close family. Of course, her cerebral palsy was a lot worse than mine, but she went through the same kinds of things I do. That is a great book and I read it over and over. Then there are some books I just don't like. I listen to them anyway, but they are just "okay" books, not good books.

I come to the talking book center to browse and to get a particular book I want to read. When I want a book in a series, I just say to the library staff, "I want to read another book by this person." And I come in here for books that I would like to read over again, that I would like to read for a third or a fourth time. Sometimes, too, the cassette machine gets sick and I have to bring it in and get a new one.

It'd be nice to have a smaller cassette recorder that we could carry around. I'd like one the size of a paperback book with a tiny earphone, so then I could play it wherever I want. I just can't take a big, bulky tape recorder everywhere I want to go. I've read a couple of books with sound effects and they are nice for little kids.

My Mom read me *Little House on the Prairie* and I want it on tape because I want to listen to it again. I want all nine books in the series, but I don't think the library has any of them on tape; it has just one of them on record.

I hope the Raleigh library has more classics, more books. I don't want to ever run out of books. That is my fear—that one day I will walk into the library and they will say, "Heidi, you've read all the books." And then I'll say, "Oh, no!"

I wonder how many books I have read. A couple of years ago I was on a panel for talking books in Macon, Georgia. The whole convention was about talking books, so I talked and they asked me all kinds of

questions. Maybe I've read five hundred or seven hundred books since then, probably seven hundred.

Reading is important because you learn things and because you have a good time. It is so different reading my social studies book, reading my textbooks for school, and reading talking books.

Reading is important for everybody, although some people like books better than others. Books alone don't get you good grades; you still have to study and work hard. We can read ten hours a day and still, the more we learn the more we find out how dumb we are. There is so much to learn! We can never learn everything.

Mrs. Coe: It would be nice for Heidi to have some kind of periodical on tape that gave her some news stories and current events. Since our television mostly features disaster stories, she has no analytical news stories, no *Time* magazine on tape. Heidi really wants to know about current events, but there is nothing at her level, for example, about the Middle East situation. She hears a bit on the news and we know a bit from reading ourselves, so we piece it together. And we need a teenage magazine on tape, for articles on beauty, makeup, how to meet boys, those kinds of things, in short bits. Heidi gets this information indirectly from the stories she reads, but she has to ferret it out and some of the stories are pretty old.

She doesn't have the manual coordination to use records—to go back, stop, and start—and the tape is just so easy for her.

I would suggest that the library take the classics that are now on records and have them put on tape. Heidi's teacher gave us a list of the classics that she wanted Heidi to read and we couldn't get any of them on tape, but they were all on disc. That's frustrating. The *Little House* stories, those early ones, need to be put on tape, because this generation of readers doesn't want the discs.

I think that Heidi would be really lost without talking books. I would have to spend all my time reading to her. During the school year I already have to read to her a lot because of the tests, and during the summer I would have to read too because she would be constantly wanting more to listen to. She gets a lot of insights and solutions to problems from her reading. She'll come and ask me a question and then go back and read the book some more. Reading is just another input for her, other than TV, which has such a limited role.

Mrs. Lynn Bombelyn, mother of **Jason** (boy, age four), who has vision loss due to Leber's Disease
Athens, Georgia

Jason was about two years old when he first got talking books. He loves all kinds of books. We didn't read this week because it's the first week of vacation. We've got to get busy next week, though. I've got to learn braille and I'm scared to death—the worst part is that Jason is ahead of me in learning it. Jason's counselor left us lesson plans for the summer. Jason is a very, very bright child. At ten months he talked in complete sentences. I would go into the grocery store with him and he would say, "Mommy, what's this?" The people in the store would look at me and ask, "Did that child say that?" And I'd say, "Yes, ma'am." And they'd ask, "How old is he?" This was the reaction I always got. And since Jason has learned to talk it has been one question right after another.

The way the talking books have helped us most is by improving Jason's listening—his being aware of what he was hearing. You see, he was constantly talking and he would barely give you time to answer his question before he was asking another one. The talking books taught him that he had to be quiet for a while in order to be able to really listen to what the tape was telling him. And that helped us tremendously.

The books also help me to explain things to Jason. Having a visually handicapped child really opened up a whole new world to me. I mean, we just take things like sitting down and eating, using silverware, or writing with a pencil for granted. I took all of these things for granted until Jason came along, and then I realized that I didn't know how to explain a lot of things to him.

Jason was about a year and a half old when I found out what his problem was. We knew he had a problem, and he had been seeing an eye doctor, but the eye doctor put him in glasses and glasses didn't help. Jason has a very rare eye disease and every time we saw this eye doctor he said, "His eyes are improving so much, by the time the child is in first grade he won't even need glasses." At that age children grow very quickly, so we went through three sets of glasses. At first we thought we saw improvement, but one day I said to my husband, "We've got to face facts. We are not seeing the improvement that we think we are." The problem is, Jason's vision comes and goes. At times when there is a

penny on the floor, Jason will go to it and pick it up. At other times he will feel around for it. So we called Emory University Hospital and got them to recommend a doctor, who diagnosed Jason's disease right away.

The eye disease that Jason has is called Leber's Disease and little is known about it. There are two forms: in one, the child is born blind or almost blind; in the other, the person loses sight later in life. The disease is inherited, but we try not to worry. There are only seven known cases of the blind-at-birth kind that Jason has; the other kind is more common. Because we were told that another child might have the disease, my husband had a vasectomy, but I got pregnant anyway. I then went to a geneticist to find out what the odds were that the baby I was carrying would have Leber's Disease, and luckily I had very good odds. The only thing that would help Jason is a complete eye transplant, and I believe that one day doctors will be able to do that.

When Jason's problem was first accurately diagnosed, I was in shock for a while. Then I thought, "Okay, I can handle this. I have to. The first thing to do is find a school for Jason and find out what is available to him." It took me four months to even find out what the county had to offer; I dialed one number after another and got the same response at every one: "I'm sorry we don't have the answer, but maybe these people will. I'll give you their number."

A counselor at Atlanta Area Services for the Blind finally helped us find out where to go. Then it was just a matter of getting Jason evaluated to get him into a school program for three days a week, two hours a day. He hated it! I took him there and picked him up, but the separation for a child that young is not easy. When he was about two and a half years old, he moved to a special class at the local elementary school. Jason and a little girl were the only two in the class with eye problems; the other children had different handicaps. He would start to cry when we arrived each morning and it was very hard to leave him. He almost knew by my footsteps when I came into the room to pick him up.

Then we moved to another county and it took a while again to find out what was available. I was amazed by the difference in schools. This time a school bus picked him up in the morning and dropped him off in the afternoon, every day. He was in school from Monday through Friday, and he adjusted to that schedule much better than the three-day week. I could tell a huge improvement within two weeks. When I put him on the bus he'd call, "Bye, Mom. See you later." He loved it.

When we moved to Athens a year ago we had to go through the whole process again, only this time it didn't take us quite so long to find the information. Somehow, though, I managed to get the number for a special school for retarded children here. When I called the school I was told, "Oh, yes. We definitely have a program for him." When we got there, the teachers kept talking about Jason's being retarded. I said, "No, you don't understand. Jason is in no way retarded. His only problem is his eyes." They talked to him for a few minutes and were all looking at each other, quite puzzled. When they tested him, he scored at the second-grade level. So back we went to the good old Atlanta Area Services for the Blind to find a more appropriate school.

Now, because of the counselor-teacher who works with Jason, I feel for the first time that there is somebody other than family who really cares about him. She feels that he is so smart that he needs the best education possible and that he needs as much of her time as possible. She truly cares about him.

The one suggestion I have from my experience is that it should be easier for parents to find out what is available for their visually handicapped children. There were so many times, after all of those phone calls, when I felt like saying, "Forget it." But I couldn't forget it because Jason's life depended on what I did then.

Jason's brother Keith is only fourteen months older; Keith was in kindergarten this year and next year Jason will be. There is only one kindergarten here and only one teacher, who was very rude to me recently. She has made it very obvious that she does not want Jason in her class. She told us at the staff meeting that she did not like mainstreaming whatsoever and that there should be a special class for children with Jason's impairment. Our counselor interrupted and said to the teacher, "There is no way we would stick Jason in a class like that because there aren't enough kids with just one impairment in the county to have a special class. It would be a mixture of all disabilities, which would mean that the class would have to go so slow that Jason would get discouraged." The teacher just repeated that she did not think that a public school was the place for a handicapped child, that he would not be able to go to the bathroom by himself, and that he would not be able to find the bus by himself. I said, "Jason goes to the bathroom by himself at home. Once you show him where it is at school, he can tell you exactly how many steps it is going to take him to get there. You are not going

to have to walk him in there and hold his hand while he is using the restroom."

I tried to tell that kindergarten teacher, "I understand that you're scared, because you are thinking, 'What will I do with him? How will I act around him?' First of all, you act around him just the way you act around the other kids. And as for the rest of it, once you know Jason it's going to come naturally. You're going to have to think about things a little more, but other than that there is no difference."

I am very upset about this problem. There is a school for the blind in Macon, but I don't feel that Jason is old enough to live away from home. I want him to know he is my child, that I love him as much as I love his brothers. But believe me, if I find that I have tried everything here and it doesn't work, then I will have no choice but to send him to Macon, because I am not going to hold him back. I want him to use that brain of his as much as he can, develop it as much as he can. But at the same time I'm not going to send him down to the school for the blind without trying the public school here. We are hoping that we can wait until our land here is paid off, rent it out, and then move to Macon with Jason. Then he would be able to go to the school for the blind during the day and come home at night, as Keith would at his school. I don't want Jason pampered. I want Jason to have a normal life, and if we can't treat him normally, then we can't expect him to have a normal life. I try to teach Jason that he is different, but that everybody else is different, too. Jason's vision is his way of being different. There is nothing wrong with that.

People who are in college studying to be teachers may not ever have a handicapped child in their class, but they need to be aware of the needs of handicapped children just in case. All they can do is say, "I'll try my best to benefit that child."

Our counselor sees another little boy whose mother seems to have the same attitude as that kindergarten teacher. "I don't know how to take care of him, so I'm not going to try." And she doesn't. The child is less than a year younger than Jason, but he doesn't talk and he is still in diapers. I've been told that it's a miracle that a visually impaired child is toilet trained before the age of four. I think the mothers just don't want to take the time or make the effort to train the children. Other mothers might think, "I've got to have a life of my own." Fine. My whole world doesn't revolve around three kids; if it did I would go crazy. But I am

able to clean my house, take care of my kids, and have a life of my own!

As for the cassette books, I am very happy with them. Since we have moved here, though, we've been in a turmoil. One thing after another has happened; with the new baby and other things, I have not had a chance to order any books for Jason. Our counselor has, though, and when she comes here to work with him, they also read the cassette books.

Jason has said many times that he would like to have a little tape player, because then he could take it in the car when we go places and listen to stories. Keith can look out the window and see the things that we are passing, and the tape player would occupy Jason.

He likes the buttons with the symbols on the library machine. When Jason was two we had only the records, but when we moved to Athens we began getting the tapes. If we were having a particular problem, we ordered a book on the subject to help us explain it to him. How do you explain a tree to him? It's tall, it's got green leaves. What the heck is a leaf?

There is one thing that I really want to do that, with the baby being little, I just haven't had the time for yet. I want to find other parents with visually impaired kids so that the kids will learn to play together and will realize that they are not alone. At the same time the parents will be good for each other. There are times, and thank goodness they are getting fewer and farther between, when I just sit down and cry because there is so much to learn. How do I go about doing this? The only solution is to calm down and take my time.

We are teaching Jason that he can do anything if he wants to badly enough. Many times—and he gets sick of hearing this—if Jason tells me he can't do something, I tell him, "Can't never could."

A postscript from Jason's librarian: "You will be interested to know about Jason Bombelyn. His parents are now separated and the mother, Jason, and his brothers have moved to another town in Georgia, out of our area. We have transferred him to Gainesville, Georgia, and I wrote the librarian there a letter about him. Before this happened, though, the teacher he was to have had—the one who didn't want him—either quit or lost her job, so she is no longer in a position to reject children with

handicaps and give their families such pain. She did leave over Jason, I heard."

Mrs. Daphne Bogdan and her son, **Robert Bogdan** (age eleven), who has a learning disability and low vision
Spring Lake, New Jersey

Mrs. Bogdan: My son Robert is learning disabled and has been in a special class for the neurologically impaired at Harbor School for six years. He has a history of vision problems as well. When Robert was born we were told that he had nystagmus. Then when he was about six weeks old he became very fussy, and failed to react to the mobile or any of his other toys, unless they were musical. So I took him to the doctor who said that Robert's eyes hadn't completely developed yet and that he really hadn't begun to see light and dark. Because he had a vision problem right from birth, he was also clumsy. He was always walking into walls or bumping into things, so I kept him more confined to a playpen than I had our three older children.

Robert's vision was 20/200 or worse when he was two years old, but it has been hard to test him, even as he got older, because of his poor vision and learning disability. He will know the word for something but have a hard time verbalizing it. Identifying letters on an eye chart was out of the question because he didn't know the alphabet. It was very difficult to measure his vision because the doctor couldn't ask him, "Which way is the M or the E pointing?" If the person giving Robert the tests showed him a sailboat, he wouldn't be able to remember what a sailboat was called, so he would say something else.

I believe that we contacted the Commission for the Blind before Robert went to school. The Commission's offices moved into this area of the state shortly afterward, and the service has been terrific ever since. The counselor came constantly to Robert's school to work with the children in the visually handicapped class, and she always stopped in Robert's room to see how he was doing. He always told her about the books he was listening to. She gave us our first talking books catalog and told us about the library service. Then I went to a Commission workshop where speakers using slides and visual aids explained all the materials and services that were available to Robert. I got to speak to other parents at this meeting and I enjoyed that interaction. Although

Robert isn't an albino, for some time it was thought that he might be because he was very light-skinned and he had white hair and a nystagmus. So at this workshop I met parents of albino children and parents of visually handicapped children, and we talked about our similar problems.

Robert has never had any problem getting library materials; he has always been helped by the counselor through the school. The catalogs always come and we sit down together and read through the lists.

Robert keeps the tape recorder on his desk. When he was younger, he used only the record player, the first machine he received. The records came with the print books, and he looked at the pictures and listened to the records. He sometimes found that the records were scratched or that the needle would get stuck in a groove. Then he heard about the tape recorder and got really excited, because a tape recorder was a "big kids' thing." We ordered the tape player and he was thrilled with it. He has never had a problem with the tapes.

Now the tapes come by themselves, without the print books. And that is fine with me, because by now he is so frustrated after six years of trying to learn to read that he would rather not see a print book. His problem is similar to dyslexia—he sees the letters upside down and backwards. He is so frustrated because the teachers have tried so many methods that at this point he doesn't even want to look at the print book. He will draw pictures, instead.

Every day he goes into his room, turns on the tape recorder, and listens to the tape books. If it's a special tape, like one of the C. S. Lewis books, he'll just keep playing it over and over. He'll do that with the Hardy Boys mysteries, too. Certain books really interest him and he just enjoys them immensely. He'll sit there and either set up a little battle with his army men or draw, unless he has a headache. Robert is prone to migraines; he is very sensitive to the sunlight or bright light. When he gets a headache, he'll darken his room and turn on the tape player. He uses it every single day; I never have to ask him to use it. Robert gets a lot out of the taped books because all of his learning is by ear—he picks up everything he hears.

I don't know whether the teachers use tapes in his classroom. They use many other things and are always trying to get him to use the print book, so they don't give him tapes or request that any of his textbooks be taped. But he is transferring to the Brielle School [in Brielle, New

Jersey] in September and they have a tape recorder in the classroom. They have also requested textbooks from Recording for the Blind for a child in the classroom this year.

Robert is in a nongraded, self-contained classroom now, and next year, because the teachers feel that he'll have an adjustment going to a new school, they plan to keep him in a self-contained class for neurologically impaired children until he gets his feet on the ground. Then they will mainstream him for math, social studies, and other subjects he can cope with.

In his present school there has been so much emphasis on the three R's that there has not been time to develop an extensive science or social social studies program. Robert is really interested in science and when he goes to Brielle next year there will be a regular plan of classes so he can take more science. He is ready for the transfer. He needs exposure to "normal" children. Where he is now he can help the other children, and he has a great deal of empathy for them. But he doesn't know, as he approaches the adolescent years, what real life out there is like.

I'm a special education teacher by training; my husband is a pediatrician and his partner is a specialist in neurology, so I've had access to experts and their books.

All three of my boys are a little lacking in reading skills. My husband and I are both stronger in math and science, and our four children are pretty much the same way. Of course, Robert has the most serious problem of the four children, and his reading skills have been slowest to develop.

Other learning-disabled children might be in a regular school, mixing with other children, but Robert isn't, and when he comes home from school he really doesn't have anybody to play with. His tape recorder is like a friend to him. If my second son had to use taped books, I would probably have to twist his arm to make him listen, because he would rather be running to the beach to surf, or riding his skateboard with the guys, or doing something else, because he has friends. Robert really doesn't, so that makes a difference.

In the summer Robert participates in a swim program in the morning, but he does not enjoy the beach. When he goes to the beach, as he sometimes does with his younger cousins, he often gets a headache. So he's not out there every day running and screaming.

In the fall he participates in the soccer program but there are few other

activities I can push him into. He tried Little League, but it was a crushing experience because he never got a hit. He just lacks the coordination needed for sports. The coaches on the soccer team, however, have been very cooperative; instead of telling him that he is a left quarterback and confusing him, they just point out his position and tell him what he has to do and make him feel comfortable. But he is approaching that twelve-year-old stage where the situation is going to be much more competitive and cruel, and he is going to begin to feel the stress.

Robert: The library is good. I like all the mystery tapes and things. I've got a big pile of books still in my room, and I want to get more of the Narnia Chronicles. I get more into my head with the tapes, because I find it hard to read print. The tapes are much better, much clearer. We have to read print books in school, and if the teacher writes on the blackboard, I have to go to the front of the room to read what she wrote. And I can only be in a classroom with a few kids. We have a small library for books in the school. I brought my tape into school once and told them all about it, but they still don't understand it. I listen to the tapes at home when I am making things, such as maps for "Dungeons and Dragons"—I like to play games like that while I'm listening.

Right now I'm listening to a tape about people on television shows. I can't understand it, so I don't like it. When I want a book I ask my mom to look it up in the catalog and order it for me.

Mrs. Bogdan: I put Robert in kindergarten before he was five to get him classified and to get the best situation I could for him. My husband's partner works at the child evaluation clinic at the hospital; he tests and classifies children who have problems with school, so he was involved. But I must say the school district really dragged its feet on evaluating him. I put Robert in school in September and I told the school that he had a problem. In January a teacher called me and said, "You know, he doesn't know his alphabet." I said, "Yes, I know. He is having a problem and will have a problem. . . ." But it was a funny situation because none of my other children had gone to that school and I was considered an outsider, a spy or something. But the team finally got together and worked up a plan for Robert in June of that year. Then of course everybody went on vacation. So on August 28 they called us all together and said, "We'd like you to know that your child is neurologically impaired, that he does have a visual handicap, and that his best mode of learning seems to be auditory."

Robert hears everything. Most of us tune out so much of what we hear. For example, if I were to sit down at the breakfast table with the radio on, I might not tune in to everything that's being said if I were, say, waiting for the weather forecast. If Robert is sitting there having breakfast he will often say, "Would you please turn the radio off? It's making me sick." If he had heard that story on the radio yesterday about the thirteen-year-old who had a baby and killed it, he would have been beside himself. It is absolutely amazing what he hears and what he thinks about.

My husband's partner believes it is not really so important for all children to be able to read, because children can learn by so many other methods. Teachers get most annoyed with his philosophy, but he just thinks that it's a complete waste of time to try to teach some children to read. Robert's case is a good example. He has had so much exposure to reading and books and print, he can't take any more of it—he gets so angry and frustrated. Yet the teachers say that he is cooperative; he is not an aggressive child. And if the teachers ask him to take out a book and try again he always does it. They say he works so hard, but he never gains any satisfaction from it because he never sees an improvement. He has been at that school for six years, and he is still reading on a second-grade level! Children who never learn to read come out of school with such an inferiority complex because they have been told over and over that they should be reading print.

We ordered many taped books as soon as we could for Robert, and because of his inactivity in sports he has always made use of every spare moment to listen to them. The mailman would bring three in and we would have three going back out.

I told Robert last summer that the library for the blind was having a summer reading program and he said "I'm not doing that!" Maybe it should be called the Summer Listening Program. I think of reading as reading print, and so do the children.

The neurologist said that our second son is perceptually impaired. He has always been in parochial school, doing all right overall but not too well in reading and horribly in spelling. He scores on the twelfth-grade level for math and the third-grade level for spelling. The whole family is like that! Even our daughter, who has been in the National Honor Society, has very high math SAT scores but terrible scores in reading. The second son has personality, charm, and exceptional energy. When he

had a problem copying from the board one year, he took a tape recorder so he could get the notes. But the teacher became self-conscious because they were doing a unit on health and she was afraid that my husband, the doctor, would listen to the tapes and correct her on something. Moreover, my son didn't want to be the only one in the class using a tape recorder. The principal who was there at the time tried to get many children to use tape recorders; he thought that all the students would benefit from going back over the taped notes at night. Well, now we've got a new principal and she thinks differently.

I guess all my kids really need is a good secretary once they get out of school and they'll be all set.

Mrs. Therese Snyder, the blind adoptive mother of **JoAnne Snyder** (girl, age fourteen), who is also blind
Old Bridge, New Jersey

Mrs. Snyder: When JoAnne first came to this country in 1977, the school system here found a Korean tutor to teach her English. Although children do learn languages very fast, I think it is marvelous how JoAnne has kept up. She has been on the honor roll several times.

JoAnne likes to use the Library for the Blind in connection with her school work and not just for recreational reading. When she is assigned a book report in school, the teacher will tell her she has three weeks and the book has to be on a certain subject. Now, the teachers have been very flexible with JoAnne, and if she can't find an appropriate book, they'll say, "Okay, you can do it on some other subject." But it would be nice if they didn't have to make an exception, if she could call the library, find whatever she needs available, and get it quickly.

We are very happy that there is a children's librarian now at the Library for the Blind. In the past when we called the library, we had no specific person to talk to, so the service wasn't as good. Sometimes when we haven't been able to get what JoAnne needed from the library, I've had to write notes to her teachers to ask them to extend the deadlines for her assignments. Some of the teachers have then told her, "You can't get an A if I extend the deadline," which seems too bad. On the other hand, she is mainstreamed, she is able to keep up, and we don't want them to have to make exceptions for her.

JoAnne and I both prefer braille to tapes. Her mind wanders when she

reads tapes because generally they are too slow. The special tape recorder that speeds up without distorting is not often available. She prefers braille and now we are waiting for the day when the library can afford cassette braille books and machines. To me, reading with my fingers is similar to reading with my eyes. But when I get information through my ears I feel that half of it has gone somewhere else—it hasn't reached my brain. I'm like JoAnne, but I know that she has to get used to tapes for her schoolwork.

JoAnne: I'd like more books on music. Rock music.

Mrs. Snyder: Yes, more about rock music would be good. We are always buying rock music magazines and begging people to read them to us!

JoAnne: And more "Popular Music Lead Sheets."

Mrs. Snyder: Yes, but it's hard the way those lead sheets only show the chords. In most sheet music at least the left hand is written out. We didn't understand it in the beginning but JoAnne has gotten used to it now. So, if "Popular Music Lead Sheets" could be brought up to date it would be nice. I am sure that there are other people who use them.

JoAnne: And I wish they came out once a month.

Mrs. Snyder: We subscribe to a couple of magazines. One is *Braille Variety News*, which we think has a poor selection of articles. JoAnne and I would rather have one complete magazine, not articles from here and there. JoAnne also reads *Seventeen* magazine and she laughs because she tells me that's *my* favorite magazine, too.

There are many things that could make our lives easier, but not all of them have to do with the library. For five years I've been asking the Commission for the Blind to teach JoAnne handwriting and they haven't. JoAnne knew braille when she came to this country; she didn't know our alphabet but she picked it up right away. The Commission counselor used to see her quite often. JoAnne is a bit peeved now because she would really, really like to learn handwriting, just so she can do what the other kids do. Maybe the library *could* have a handwriting course in braille. There are pages with raised letters to help blind people learn script.

Libraries give us reading material. If books could come to us more quickly, that would be helpful. JoAnne likes the library for book reports, research work, and literature courses. For recreational reading she likes magazines. Also, we like to select what we want, rather than

having the books selected for us. I work at the New York Lighthouse for the Blind, and I am tired when I come home from work. I do not like to be greeted by a foyer full of books that we didn't order.

Sometimes I take JoAnne to work with me so she can browse in the Lighthouse library; she loves to go through the braille card catalog in the library. If the regional library could set aside one day a year for browsing, even though we're not living near there I think we could make an effort to visit the library on that day. Browsing is really a nice experience. When JoAnne is browsing at the Lighthouse library, she is doing what the other kids do when they go to a library.

JoAnne browses in the school library with the sighted children, mostly for schoolwork, but she has brought home some print books for her reader to read to her that were strictly for recreational reading. We just never have the time to read them. Within the school periods the students are so busy that I don't think they have any time for reading either. Having talking books and braille books sent to the school library has been a total waste. JoAnne hasn't read one of them because she doesn't like what is selected. She is very fussy. She doesn't have time to read for recreation. Now she is in the school play, so for the past three nights she hasn't gotten home until eight o'clock. I get home at six-thirty or later, and sometimes we don't get out of the kitchen until nine o'clock. JoAnne has a reader who comes here after school to help her with her schoolwork, and she takes piano lessons, too. When she gets to high school she is going to have even more school work to do.

JoAnne: I'd find time to read *Downbeat*.

Mrs. Snyder: We did enjoy reading *A Town like Alice* together, though. We often read books together; I'll read a little and then JoAnne will read a little. JoAnne is a wonderful braille reader, she reads very fast.

It is very hard for us to get to the regional library in Trenton. There is no direct bus transportation from here to Trenton; we have to go north to Newark and then out again, so it gets expensive.

Are the most recent catalogs of books available in braille? We get so many things here marked "catalog" in print that when my reader goes through, I just tell her to throw them away because I have so much print material. But we always go through *Braille Book Review*. JoAnne finds a lot of books that she would like to read and marks them off. For example, JoAnne would like more books on Australia.

She is going to high school next year so she will be in a different school. Now she has the honors *English course in* which she will be reading *Romeo and Juliet*. JoAnne likes Shakespeare; she read *Midsummer Night's Dream* a couple of years ago, which surprised me. But she has definite tastes.

JoAnne: The play I'm in is *Grease*. I play the part of Donna. It's a singing part and I'm also in the chorus.

Mrs. Snyder: I have really good things to say about the school that JoAnne attends this year. We live in a small town and JoAnne is completely mainstreamed; she is the only blind child in the school system. Although I wish she had the opportunity to know some blind children, I really do believe in mainstreaming. Frankly, I think that some of her teachers who have not specialized in teaching the blind have been just as good for JoAnne as teachers who are trained specifically to work with blind children. In fact, some may have been better.

Do you know what would be fun? We were just talking about *A Town like Alice*. We read the braille book and JoAnne also watched the "Masterpiece Theater" version on television and taped it. It would be nice to have some drama on tape, some plays, recorded beautifully the way the library materials usually are, as opposed to tapes from volunteer groups. I think one thing that discouraged JoAnne from reading in the beginning is that a lot of the volunteer-produced tapes are very poorly done. Most blind college students say that, even with all the marvelous books that have been done by volunteer groups, they depend on readers rather than taped books produced by volunteers. Some groups have a difficult time getting young readers, too, and young people don't always want to listen to old voices. A young person's studies are so important that their academic tapes should be as well-recorded as the Library of Congress tapes. It seems too bad that the readers of student material are not paid, so that the books could be better read.

Another thing that just occurred to me is that the library has a lot of trouble with its cassette machines, but everybody, including JoAnne, has those little "Walkman" tape players, which don't play four-track tapes. It would be nice to be able to listen to library books on the bus with a portable tape player like that. Right now I take the *New York Times Large Type Weekly* on the bus with me when I go to work. It's in braille and in JoAnne's name, but I always read it. She looks at certain articles in there, too.

Maybe there are ways that JoAnne could use the library better that we just haven't thought of. We would like to see braille maps in the Library for the Blind. The library could also have scale models there for blind people to examine; I have often thought that if I had a lot of money I would have a whole room full of models. What sighted people don't see in person they see on television or in pictures in books and magazines, so they know exactly what things look like. Often blind people, including those who have lost their sight later in life, have no concept of what certain things look like. For example, the library could have little miniatures of curiosities from other countries, such as the Eiffel Tower or a model of "E.T." People described to us what E.T. looked like, but we still weren't sure we understood. One day we went to the boardwalk and asked the man at the shooting gallery – he had stuffed animals and dolls, including E.T., as prizes – to bring down the E.T. doll so we could feel it, and he did. But models are wonderful. They don't have to be expensive, just sturdy enough to be held. It would be interesting to try to get a grant to collect models.

It is easier now for us to go into New York, to the New York Public Library's "Project Access," where there is a trained staff person, braille and recorded books, and even a Kurzweil Reading Machine. Once, when JoAnne needed information for school the person in charge of "Project Access" photocopied articles from the encyclopedia for us. I know that someone at the regular public library could do the same thing, but the person at "Project Access" is there just to help the blind. The staff there was even talking about getting readers to work in the library for college students who are doing research. Of course, that is the New York Public Library, but it's beautiful; I go in there and it has the loveliest atmosphere. I guess I feel the way people feel when they go to their own library.

JoAnne: I go to the public library a lot with my reader. It has records, cassettes, music. The Kurzweil machine wouldn't read a rock music magazine; it only likes classical music.

Mrs. Snyder: This kid doesn't like the Optacon. I use one to look at mail and I think it's a marvelous thing but JoAnne doesn't like the noise. To me, it is a miracle that the Optacon can tell me who my letter is from.

JoAnne: Or read the want ads in magazines.

Mrs. Snyder: They always take the want ads out of the magazines we read, and JoAnne wonders what the missing ads are for. She has a syn-

thesizer and she would like to follow the ads for the latest in electronic equipment.

Mrs. Connie Garner, who has had cataracts, and her daughter **Tammy Garner** (age six), who also has vision problems
Detroit, Michigan

Tammy: I like *Winnie the Pooh*, *The Who Owl*, and the story about the little girl who had a marker and made circles all over her doll to make her look like she had chicken pox. I like these stories because they are so funny.

I listen to tapes at home on a tape recorder and at my Grandma's house a lot. I wanted a tape about Winnie the Pooh, because he is my favorite. I liked it when he spilled all the honey and then ate it all. But the library didn't have a tape. Mama listened to *The Green Kangaroo* with me, but it's more fun at my Grandma's house.

Mrs. Garner: Grandma plays a game with her in which she stops the tape and asks her questions about the book. Tammy gets a quarter for every question that she gets right, and if she can remember more of the story than Grandma asks her to, then she gets more money. Tammy has already earned thirty dollars this way.

Tammy is fantastic in school; she is in first grade but she is doing second-grade work.

Tammy: I always listen to music and book records in school, and when it's almost time to go home, the teacher always reads us a book or plays a record.

Mrs. Garner: In the summer Tammy is going to sell candy to earn money so the school can buy computers.

Tammy: For some prizes, too, for a bike and a watch. I've got to sell the most candy and get all the prizes!

Mrs. Garner: What was the funny name of the lady you called at the library last summer for the summer reading program?

Tammy: Poison Ivy. Her voice sounded real crackly. And my name was Bluebird then; next time when I call her I'm going to tell her that I want to be Redbird.

Mrs. Garner: This year the summer reading is about space and star invaders. Tammy loves robots, like R2-D2 in "Star Wars."

Tammy: I like the library because it has lots of books. Maybe some-

day when it's not a school day I'll go and see what the library is like.

Mrs. Garner: Grandma had promised to take her to the library to show her what it's like. My mother has a very strong association with the library; she is the chairperson of the library advisory committee, and she is always urging me to read. When Grandma last went to the library for the advisory committee meeting, she planned to take Tammy with her, but Tammy had school all day. Tammy asked her, "'Are you going to see Poison Ivy?" Tammy wanted to be able to touch her to see if she really was poison.

Tammy: But last time I talked to Poison Ivy she was extra nice, very nice.

Mrs. Garner: When Tammy's daddy comes over and listens to adult talking books, Tammy asks him questions about what he is listening to. For instance, he was listening to *The Medical Detectives*, which had a story about a little girl and something had happened to her. Tammy came into the room at the end of the story and said, "'Well, why did so and so do that to the little girl?" I don't discourage her from asking questions; if she doesn't ask, she is never going to learn.

I am pretty satisfied with the books that she gets. She is reading *A New Apartment for Norma* and *The Green Kangaroo*. My niece is supposed to visit us this month and she loves to listen to the books, so my mom will be making the bets with both the girls.

I work with Tammy constantly, too. When she was about three I did ABC's with her, and I had enrolled her in Head Start by the time she was three and a half. I love to read. Every chance I get I read a mystery. I love good detective writers like Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen, and Nero Wolfe. Spooky books hold your interest so you don't want to stop reading. Every time you get where you are about to stop, there's another good part so you just can't put it down. I'll read anything that catches my eye. My husband likes to read, too, and Tammy is taking after us. I'm glad she is, because reading is really good. If you can't go outside, then reading is a good pastime. I wish I had finished school, though, because there are a lot of words that I can't make out. I'm trying with all my heart to help Tammy, because I want her to finish school.

Every time I go to Tammy's class, all the kids welcome me. They'll say, "Help me with my spelling." I don't think they get as much help or as much attention at home as Tammy does. I devote a lot of time to her

and try to help her by working out little games with her. If you don't do this, children are not going to learn—they won't be interested.

Tammy's teacher tells me, "Tammy comes to school so eager and ready to work. The other kids are here, okay, but she is eager and ready to go." I've always told Tammy that school is good, and she believes me. I've always told her how good reading is, too. We sit and read the nursery rhyme book that Mommy bought her in large print. She is memorizing some of the rhymes from the book.

I read large-print and tapes myself. Right now I'm reading *The Medical Detectives*. I like to read books that have to do with doctors and hospitals. We read *Exodus* together. When my mom finds a good book she gives it to me, and when I find one, I give it to her.

The Supplemental Security Income program assigned us a visiting nurse who has been like my right arm to me. She has helped me through a lot of situations; I don't know what I'd have done without her. She got Tammy an eye appointment at Children's Hospital. Last week I had Tammy's eyes examined again. She is legally blind; her pupils are not round but oval and underdeveloped. Tammy also has cataracts, and the doctors think that by the time she is ten or eleven she'll have an eye operation.

I have had cataract operations, so I know what they are like. In fact, when I was ten I spent the summer in and out of the hospital having four operations, which was murder. But it would be terrific if my daughter could get good eyes.

I learned how to use the braille writer, and so now I am teaching Tammy too, even though she is not totally blind. If she ever goes blind, she will need to know how to write and read braille. I am trying to teach her to write in braille because she is fascinated with the slate and stylus. I can't use the slate and stylus myself, but I can use the braille writer; I know there are three dots on either side and I have the list of letters.

My mother was the one who suggested I get talking books for Tammy, because Tanmy loved to read. She said, "Why cheat her out of that privilege when she could be getting more reading practice even after the school year?" And I said, "That sounds fantastic." Then, when the library ran its summer reading program, she had something to compete for. She won a T-shirt and a patch last year for reading, which she thought was fantastic. This year she might win something again if she studies real hard.

Tammy is not in a regular classroom; instead she is in a classroom for children with low vision. There are only seven kids in the room, so the teacher can work with each one. None of the other parents has come in and spent any time in the classroom, so when I come, the kids love to have another person to work with them. I told the teacher, "I'm not that bright, but I'll try." She said, "Try and help the kids. If you don't understand something, then just ask me." I didn't want anybody to know that I'm not that bright, but now I ask questions. And that's what I teach Tammy, to ask questions.

I come to the class when I feel like it, and I may spend the whole day with them, or three or four hours. All the kids are tickled to death to have me there. And I don't mind going in because I'm not doing anything at home.

Mrs. Linda Smiley and her son **Jason Smiley** (boy, age thirteen), who lost his sight following surgery at age nine
Detroit, Michigan

Jason: I like books about baseball and football players. I'm interested in space books, too; one book I liked was *Stars and Constellations*, which was on cassette. Mostly I read the books at home, during the week. I have enough time to do my homework and read if I want to.

Mrs. Smiley: Jason is assigned book reports in school and we go through the catalogs I have, but basically his interests now lie in anything having to do with space and stars and planets and sports. He has a typical thirteen-year-old's love of sports. But we can't find cassettes for sports books about newer stars, so I have to read to him from print books. In the areas of space and science, too, there must be more current books than those available to Jason on tapes or records—books that sighted kids are getting in school. Jason has a science program for the visually handicapped in school, but there aren't enough books in the catalog to supplement what he is learning there. Some of the talking books are twenty years old, which is *old by* today's standards. In Jason's school kids are being exposed to computers and other advanced technology; I would like to see more books in that area, because it is a very good field for visually handicapped people to get into. Computers are really popular with kids, and the field is certainly something that Jason

can think about as a career choice. I don't want to turn him in that direction, but he has an interest in it now.

It is difficult at times to find things to keep his interest going and keep him from getting discouraged. I think keeping Jason's enthusiasm at a high level is very important. Sometimes if Jason needs something for school that we can't get through talking books, I try to get it in print form. Then either I read it to him or I record a chapter at a time whenever I possibly can. His school library has nothing available for him.

Jason: I don't even have a lunch program. That was cut out.

Mrs. Smiley: The school for the visually impaired is really strapped financially. It is a public school that serves all the visually impaired students from Dearborn to the Monroe County line. The school just doesn't have enough facilities, and the equipment they have is very old—they don't have the money to get it repaired. Many organizations, however, supplement the school's program, so I wonder what the school does with its state and county funds. I realize there have been funding cutbacks. This year an organization I belong to—the Lionesses—has given the school a couple of thousand dollars just for some computers and other equipment that the children need. Money is tight. Jason's school has no school library and no gym.

Jason: In school I read in braille.

Mrs. Smiley: He reads at the eighth-grade level in braille, and he's been blind for only four years.

Jason: Our teacher has read to us, too. He's read *The Snake That Went to School* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The kids like being read to once in a while.

Mrs. Smiley: But his teacher has students that range in age from nine to fourteen, and it is difficult to keep them all interested in the same book. So most of Jason's reading is outside school.

Jason: I like reading in the summer, too. When I was in the summer reading program last year, I read the most books and got an award.

Mrs. Smiley: He's already asked me about this summer's program. I said, "Okay, I'll call and find out for you." From the time he was in preschool, Jason has been an avid reader. I always found him in the corner with a book, rather than in the sandbox or flying through the air being Batman or something. The whole time Jason was in public school, before he lost his sight, he was always eager to go to the library with me and check out books. I've always enjoyed books, and I've always read to

my children. As soon as they were able to sit on my lap I'd take out a book and read to them.

Jason: I'd like to learn how the talking books are checked out, how the whole library process works.

Mrs. Smiley: I don't know why you can't have all the visually impaired kids come to the library and show them how you get the tapes for them—how the process works. Jason wants to know how everything works. For example, after we call the talking book library, what do the librarians do? Where do our requests go? Where does the library have its index? I took Jason to the regular public library and showed him the card catalog so he would learn how things are indexed.

What does a visually impaired student like Jason do when he gets to a university and has required reading material? Does Jason send someone out for the books? Will there be a library for him where he can go to get cassettes? How can he find out this information himself without relying on other people all the time?

I think it would be an excellent idea to have cassettes at our local public library, basically because the postal system is lousy. When I place an order with the Library for the Blind for delivery by mail, it takes two weeks for us to get casual reading material. When Jason has a reading assignment and I've made the arrangements beforehand, though, the Library for the Blind has sent books to this public library and I pick them up here. That system is much faster.

Jason asked me, "Is my library bigger than this public library? What's the biggest library?" Well, I have not taken him to the main library in Detroit but I have told him about it. I said, "Jason, there are just rooms and rooms and rooms of books there." I think he is just trying to visualize how big the regional library is.

I knew absolutely nothing about services for the blind when Jason lost his sight, and that includes library services for the blind, too. I believe one of the social workers at the hospital where Jason was a patient mentioned the talking book program, and it stuck in my mind. But there was so much that we had to learn in the next few months. He had to be put in a special school, but we didn't know where to go, who to turn to, what to do about so many things. No one should ever have to find information the way I have had to. I have had to call New York, Washington, D.C., Houston, California—this is ridiculous! There must be some place where information about the services for the blind—

including library services—could be made available, whether it's a library or somewhere else. People whose children lose their sight or are born sightless must know how to find information to help them cope with the problem.

I am a lot smarter now and I have met a lot of people. I always leave my name and phone number at the hospital and with other organizations I work with because I believe that no one should have to go through what I did. In the past three years I've had about fifty phone calls from other parents whose children have lost their sight very suddenly. They say to me, "What do I do? Someone said to call you."

When Jason lost his sight, we had no real information on where to turn for help—just the first contact with the social worker after his surgery. Within the week we discovered that the surgery had left him totally blind. What do you do when you have a nine-year-old boy who has just lost his sight? I was first referred to the Greater Detroit Society for the Blind. A worker came out and the first thing she did was to tell us what our rights were. Then she told us what we should do; she took a great burden off our shoulder—she was a tremendous help.

But I have a friend whose daughter is in Jason's class; the girl has been blind since birth. The girl calls Jason every day after school. One day when she was talking to me on the phone she said, "You know, I'm so lonely." She had gotten a tape recorder from her uncle but her mother wasn't home and the babysitter had told the child not to use the machine because she didn't want anything erased or destroyed. I can understand the babysitter's caution, but I can also understand how the girl felt, so I spoke to her mother the following day and said, "Doesn't she have a cassette machine from the library?" "What cassette machine?" my friend said. "Don't you know what talking books are?" I asked her. "No, what are they?" I couldn't believe it. I have been in the program only four years, and here her daughter is fourteen. I was totally shocked.

I am amazed at the general ignorance about reading materials for the blind. Last year I wanted a history book transcribed onto cassette, but the resource teacher at Jason's school said, "I don't know who to go to." I could not believe it. I said, "I know who to go to. Do you mean to tell me that you do not have a list of people, a list of organizations who do this?" She didn't.

I just shake my head in amazement because people don't know what their rights are, they don't know we have a library, they don't know

where to take things to get them brailled. When I needed some Catholic reading materials for Jason's catechism class, I contacted an agency in New York and those people have been simply marvelous. They call us personally on the phone to find out if everything is satisfactory and to ask when he'll be needing new books. I don't get any information from Jason's school; it should be provided– I'm paying for it.

If Jason were mainstreamed all day, I don't know how we would handle it. It is very difficult as it is, when he is mainstreamed for just two classes. Next year he'll be going on to high school, and we are keeping the mainstreaming basically to two classes, Literature and Michigan History. We don't want to mainstream him in three or four classes because he will have a lot of reading for the two he will be in.

My experience with mainstream teachers has been poor. In the past four years I have had only one good one who has worked with me. Because the teachers don't seem to get any cooperation from the special education department per se, I always tell all his teachers, "Tell me what you need. I will help you locate it." I know where I can get things brailled or recorded. I can send to New York, or I can take the books down to Wayne State. Sometimes I feel that I shouldn't have to do all this, but if I didn't take the initiative, things wouldn't get done and Jason wouldn't have what he needs. That is what makes me angry!

Before the end of school this year we will have a list of books Jason will need for his mainstream classes next year; then the special education department will have all summer to record them. But the school district office will probably say to me in September, "We don't have the books." And I will say, "What do you mean you don't have them? What have you been doing all summer? Your job did not end when he got out of school this summer. You told me you would have x number of books for him and you don't have them. My child is sitting in your classroom and you don't have any reading material for him. He doesn't have the braille, he doesn't have anything. It is not fair to him!"

It's a big battle. I get so weary sometimes, but I know if I give in, Jason will suffer. I want what's best for him. I want him to go to Michigan State, as he wants to, and I want him to do what he wants to do. Parents shouldn't have to fight for their kids as we do, but if we don't fight, our kids don't get help.

Take another example: scouting. Jason has been in scouting since he was seven, and when he went into Webelos, a few years ago, we

thought he should be in the troop with the boys he goes to school with. When I called the leader of that troop, he said, "I will not take him because he is blind." I said, "You what?" He said, "I will not take him because he is blind." I said, "What does that have to do with it? What if he were deaf? What if he were missing an arm or a leg? You're telling me you won't take my kid?" I hung up and called the scouting office. I told them, "That leader can't do that. You are denying Jason his rights and that's all there is to it."

The troop that Jason had to be in still gave me a hard time. I asked a member of the scouting committee whom I know, "Do you have any positions open on the board? If you do, I want the one with the most clout." The chairman of the committee had just resigned and the chairman outvotes any scout master or troop leader. I said, "That's what I want. I don't care about the work. I'll do the work between midnight and four in the morning—just give me the job." The first meeting was at my house. The troublesome troop leader was there and he wanted to know who the new chairman was. I raised my hand and he asked me what my name was. "I'm Mrs. Smiley. I believe you talked to me. Remember when I said that I wanted my son Jason to be in your Webelos program?" I'll tell you that man wanted to die. "What night did you say it met? Oh, Monday nights at seven o'clock. We'll be there."

My husband shakes his head. I don't have time for gardening, I don't work, and people say to me, "What do you do all day?" If they only knew. I feel like I have devoted my whole life to this.

Jason: I'm worth it.

Mrs. Smiley: You turned out to be a good kid.

Jason: You know something else that bothers me? The sloppy job some people do in brailling books. My teacher has a woman who does it, and there are so many mistakes it is not even funny. They don't proofread it.

Mrs. Smiley: We've complained to the special education department, and we've complained to the source itself. When first-year braille students can find mistakes, that's *bad*. I can braille better than that.

Jason: It makes me want to tell them to proofread it. And then I've had braille signs that were mixed up, too. For the word "good" there is "gd," but in my book it was "fd."

Mrs. Smiley: He said, "Mom, I want you to read this." So I looked and said, "What's fd?" There may be several errors on one page. They

are trying to teach him braille? I got hysterical when I called up his teacher and the teacher said, "What do you want me to do?" I said, "I'd like to get a better agency." He said, "People are hard to come by."

Why do I have to do everything? The situation is bad in general education, but it's worse in special education and it all goes back to the fact that most people today, whether professional or nonprofessional, don't take responsibility for their jobs. "As long as I'm putting in eight hours, what do I care?" I don't think I would have found this out if Jason hadn't lost his sight. Because of Jason's problem, I have had to deal with many different people, and I am appalled at the number who have demonstrated the Peter Principle—they have reached their level of incompetency.

Some talking book narrators have made exciting books sound boring. When Jason complains, I say, "But Jason, I have read the book myself and it isn't boring." If I have a copy or can get it, then I'll read it to him.

I find that when I, a parent, give my child information or criticism, he listens to me less than he will listen to one of his peers. And so it only stands to reason that if a twelve- or thirteen-year-old was narrating the book for a blind twelve- or thirteen-year-old, he'd feel, "Oh, the way he reads those statistics, he must like baseball too!"

Jason likes trivia. When he was very small, he never watched "Sesame Street," which our daughter loved, but he would watch all the game shows and then come and give me a question. When his dad came home, he would give his dad a question. I felt totally incompetent. But Jason loves anything like a game show where questions are thrown out; we have threatened to put him on a couple of them.

My husband says, "You are out there crusading for this and for that, while I'm walking around with dirty underwear." I tell him, "I don't care, Bob. You're going to live." Often I'll do laundry at one o'clock in the morning because I've been at a meeting that night. And I still don't have all the information I need. I worry now about high school and then about college. But we just take life one day—and hour—at a time.

III. SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Teachers interviewed include (1) classroom teachers of disabled children recommended by regional and subregional librarians and actively involved in helping their students use the NLS services, (2) professors of special education in universities, and (3) other educators whose particular courses of study seemed to complete the overall picture of reading habits of and library services to blind and physically handicapped children.

The teachers were first asked to talk about the children they worked with and the information and reading needs they thought these children had. They were then asked, as teachers and as teacher-trainers, what role the teacher of handicapped children has in promoting reading and library use. The interviewees investigated teachers' reports of problems that might affect a child's use of the library and suggested solutions.

Then the teachers were asked to make concrete suggestions for modifications in NLS materials and in delivery of service.

EDUCATION OF THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED: A PERSONAL HISTORY

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From 1956 to 1962 I was a teacher of visually handicapped children in the Berkeley Unified School District, one of the first public school programs for visually handicapped kids in the United States. In those days, most blind children suffered from retrolental fibroplasia (RLF). In 1962 I moved to the residential California School for the Blind, where I was the principal for two years. My colleagues were surprised at the move because during my years in public schools I was probably as critical of residential schools as anybody could be. I decided, however, that if I were going to be critical of another service I had better find out more about how that service works.

At the California School for the Blind, I found that, indeed, there is a very good reason for the existence of residential schools – that if we are

really going to offer every kind of delivery system that may meet the needs of children, then we need residential schools for the blind, too.

In 1966 I came to San Francisco State University. I think that teaching in a university setting is the best way to influence my profession because all the students who are exposed to my ideas can carry a piece of me out into the field with them when they graduate. So since 1966 I have had contact with hundreds of students. Anything I may have had to offer my profession is very well disseminated by now.

One of the compelling reasons I came to San Francisco State was that Georgie Lee Abel was here; she, along with Berthold Lowenfeld and Josephine Taylor, was one of the giants of my profession.

New Developments: Mainstreaming, Living Skills Center, Blind Babies Foundation

I now take a more cautious view toward the value of public school programs than I did when I first started teaching here, or even when I was at the School for the Blind. Specifically, I am more dubious about the extent to which children should be mainstreamed. The reason is as follows: During the late 1960s and early 1970s I was still fairly closely involved with many school programs; I supervised student teachers, and had many friends who were resource and itinerant teachers in the community and around the Bay Area. I also knew a number of people working in rehabilitation. About 1968, the bulk of the generation blinded by RLF began to graduate from high school. Many of these people had never set foot in a residential school, but had been in public school for all twelve years. We were very proud of their ability to survive public school and graduate and we assumed that these young people would be assimilated into the community – find employment and places to live, make sighted friends, all of those good things – relatively easily because of the twelve years that they had spent in their local community, in their public school with sighted contemporaries. I endured one of the most disturbing periods of my professional life in those years when we discovered that these young people were no better prepared for adult life in a sighted community than were young people who had spent their entire educational careers in a residential school.

Drawing on that experience I started the Living Skills Center for the Visually Handicapped. Its original objective was to better prepare these young high school graduates for assimilation into tne community. The

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Living Skills Center was meant to teach nonacademic skills. Then the center was supposed to quietly fade away, because it would have served its purpose of convincing people in the profession of educating visually handicapped young people that they needed to rethink the ways in which they do their job.

But the Living Skills Center has not faded away and education has not changed very much. Many living skills have to be learned when they are appropriate; for example, learning how to make a tuna casserole in the sixth grade has little carryover for the time when someone is twenty-one and living independently. And we have had problems effecting any change in education. The responsibility lies not with teachers of the visually handicapped, but with the service delivery system itself. Over the years, the majority of public school visually handicapped programs have become itinerant and resource programs. Self-contained classrooms scarcely exist now. The reasons are both economic and philosophical. Although many people believe that itinerant programs represent the ultimate in mainstreaming, I think that itinerant programs have two major disadvantages: (1) The classroom teacher does not have immediate and ready access to the special education teacher, and (2) in most itinerant programs, itinerant teachers see the visually handicapped child only once or twice a week for perhaps an hour. It is impossible to build good programs in living skills, social skills, career education, or human sexuality in those two hours or so if, as often happens, the regular teacher uses the itinerant teacher as an academic tutor—to keep the child on an academic par with his sighted contemporaries in the regular classroom. When an itinerant teacher pulls a child out of a math class, for instance, the math teacher may suggest that the child needs some drill work on times tables, so the teacher of the visually handicapped becomes an academic tutor, drilling the child on math.

Yet the teacher of the visually handicapped has special skills to meet the special needs of those students, needs that are not going to be met in the regular classroom—and using those special skills is what the teacher ought to be doing. Let the academic tutoring be handled by other people who lack the specialist's skills. I believe that a child who cannot keep up with fellow students in a regular classroom without excessive tutoring is misplaced and should not have been mainstreamed in the first place.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, my impressions of my responsibility as a teacher changed dramatically because of what we discovered

about the lack of living skills our mainstreamed graduates displayed; that change is reflected in our curriculum here. We began courses on living skills, where we concentrate on preparing our student teachers to teach human sexuality, career education, and concept development. So the teachers of the visually handicapped coming out of here now are not simply trained to adapt an academic curriculum for their blind students, which was the case at one time. Our teachers are trained to teach living skills in itinerant and resource settings, but the fact that they are relied on so much as academic tutors means that they are not using their special training in living skills. Graduates must then go to the Living Skills Center to pick up what they have missed.

The major reason for the change in our curriculum is that we now recognize that visually handicapped children have not only much the same needs as their sighted contemporaries but other needs as well that are the direct result of their vision loss. Regular classroom teachers are not prepared to meet those special needs; nor should those teachers be expected to meet those special needs. That is why teachers of the visually handicapped exist. Ironically, although the case for our existence is stronger now than ever, we are having a more difficult time maintaining our existence than earlier.

I am currently the director of Variety Club Blind Babies Foundation. Many years ago I became convinced—I don't know why it took me so long—that the first five years in the life of a blind child are by far the most important. In fact, some children never recover in school from the developmental deprivation—the barren existence—they endured in the first five years of life. So getting involved with Blind Babies Foundation has been one of the great pleasures of my professional life.

The foundation has undergone many changes over the years, but the changes have been most dramatic in the past four years. I believe that home counselors should be demonstration teachers rather than just social workers helping families. A counselor can provide wonderful support to help parents accept that blind baby, but there comes a time when somebody has to help the parents learn some of the techniques for motor and language development.

Libraries and Reading

My direct involvement in NLS programs has been minimal. I recall once when I was teaching, I attended a parents' meeting and said, "Now

I assume that all of you have your children registered with the Library of Congress." In fact, none of those parents knew anything about the NLS program. If nobody tells them, how are they going to know? Most parents of blind children depend on their child's teacher for information during the early school years. If the teacher does not share the information with the parents, then they have no way of knowing the information unless they go to a private agency, which they are not likely to do.

When I was teaching I was not particularly impressed with NLS because at that time NLS did almost nothing for children. Over the past ten years, I understand that NLS's interest in providing materials and services to children has grown considerably.

Librarians need to remember, too, that the population of visually handicapped children has changed dramatically. The majority of children being served in school programs now are not blind but have low vision, and there has been a dramatic change in the kinds of optical aids provided to children with low vision. No longer is large print the only alternative that a second-grader has; that second-grader may have all kinds of nonprescriptive and prescriptive optical aids. So the child can read a regular textbook and a regular library book. The child may not get reading materials through NLS.

As a result of all these changes, the number of braille readers is way down, and the quality of the braille reading of those children who can read tends to be low, too. I know a lot of young blind children who are now being served in itinerant programs, and their braille skills are just not what they should be. So librarians are going to find it hard to expand services to print-handicapped children because of the diversity of the population. And whether the child who can now read print with optical aids goes to the public library depends on the child's motivation to read and quality of reading skills. Are children in general going to libraries or are they watching television? I really don't know.

I have maintained for a number of years that teachers of visually handicapped children ought to go out into the community to find visually handicapped adults to bring into the classroom as role models, particularly for career education. For example, let's bring in some employed blind people to illustrate to fifth- and sixth-grade blind children that blind people really do work in the community. Similarly, children also need braille-reading role models. Children who read braille simply may not know anybody else who reads braille, so they have no basis for

comparison and no feedback about how enjoyable and fulfilling braille reading can be.

Braille: Changing Trends

When I was student-teaching, a child who was legally blind learned braille and all the other accoutrements of being blind, and nobody worried about how much the child might really be able to see. I once worked with a little boy who read braille with his eyes; the teacher's solution was to put a piece of cardboard between his head and his hands. One day when I was sitting next to him and he was reading aloud to me particularly well, I found he was reading from the regular-print book in my lap. And here we were teaching this child how to read braille!

Then along came research that indicated that you don't hurt your eyes by using them—in fact, that vision can be improved by stimulation. Although you cannot change visual acuity, you can change visual efficiency. So everybody jumped on the bandwagon. Now I fear that any child with any residual vision gets put into visual efficiency training to the exclusion of learning braille or any of the other skills that have to do with blindness. It seems as though we will do almost anything to avoid treating a child as blind; as a result, we are producing many illiterates. There is nothing literate about being able to read one three-inch-high letter on a closed circuit television magnifier. A child who can do that is not going to go to any library because that child will find reading too slow and unrewarding. As a consequence that child may eventually reach a print reading rate of fifteen or twenty words a minute, while the same child might have been a 150-words-a-minute braille reader.

Long ago I remember checking the annual reports from APH on its registration of braille readers, print readers, and children who read both print and braille. I vividly remember when 20 percent of the children reported were in that "both" column. The percentage is far less than that now. Our teachers-in-training should consider seriously whether some children can be both print learners and braille learners. I have known children who have gone through school reading novels, social science books, and history books in braille, but read science and math books in print. This practice makes a lot of sense.

Some teachers of the visually handicapped think that their primary responsibility is to encourage children to use their vision, rather than to develop good personal and academic skills that are going to be useful

over the person's entire life. Many of the children who ought to be braille readers are being pushed into print at any cost. Children who do not like to read will not visit the library, and children who cannot read will not visit the library either. There are few visually impaired children today who do not fall into one of those two categories.

Home counselors who work with Blind Babies Foundation have a fairly good idea by the time a child is two or two-and-a-half years old whether the child has enough vision to be seriously considered a potential print reader. I try to persuade home counselors that *that* is the time to expose the child to braille. I know too many children who had their first exposure to a braille symbol in kindergarten. When they go on to first grade, the expectation is that they are on a par with their sighted contemporaries in the process of learning to read. But their sighted contemporaries are already reading, because they have been exposed to print from as far back as they can remember. My contention is that we need to expose blind children to braille from their earliest days. I tell parents that if I have a blind baby on the floor crawling around, I am going to label everything at crawl level—the wall, the door, the toilet bowl, the dresser, the bed—in braille. When that child runs into the wall and bumps his head, he will reach up and find a strange configuration of dots. I am not going to tell him that the dots say "wall." But someday he is going to learn that there is a symbolic language for real things. And he is going to have this knowledge so subtly infused from his earliest memory that he will find it fun to learn to read.

In a classic film that I use to illustrate families interacting with blind children, a blind four-year-old, whom I knew and taught, is shown sitting in his mother's lap with his sighted three-year-old brother. Mother is reading to both of them, before Twin Vision books were developed. The sighted child is looking at the pictures and having a wonderful time participating in this story with his mother, while the blind child is sitting there quietly, not moving his hands or any other part of his body. He is listening but he is not participating the way his sighted brother is. If that book had been a Twin Vision book, the blind child would have had his hands down on the page exploring it. He would not be learning to read, but he would be learning that there are symbols that represent what his mother is saying. The moral is, the earlier we can develop an exposure to braille the better.

The same film has a picture of a young man who is probably the

fastest braille reader I have ever known. He is a young child in the film, and showing his home to the audience. The light switch has a braille label, the refrigerator has a braille label, every one of his toys has a braille label. I happen to know that those labels were in place from the time he was a tiny baby. Now he is an outstanding braille reader. He reads with only the right index finger, and he reads sideways, from the fingertip almost to the palm of his hand. He picked up that habit by himself somewhere along the way.

If librarians could figure out a way to become intimately involved with exposing preschoolers to braille, everyone would benefit. Right now our home counselors have to ignore the regulations in order to register preschoolers so that they can get books and playback units. But why not braille materials? Or consumables? Entire books of braille labels could be made for distribution to parents. Parents could peel off the label that says "wall," pin it on the wall, and start that early exposure.

Although I believe the steps I have outlined to introduce braille early are truly essential, my views are not universally accepted in this profession. Some people believe braille should not be introduced to a child until a good teacher of braille reading can introduce it.

All questions of methods aside, I am not sure that, once the child learns to read, libraries are meeting his needs. The library services are probably adequate but they are not being used. And why children are not being referred to libraries is a question that I cannot answer. We have inundated the students in our teacher preparation program with information. They learn all about NLS, APH, AFB, and every other service we can think of. Each of our students leaves this program with one of those folders of materials from NLS, but how much the students use these materials to inform families I really don't know. And teachers often do not have time—or take time—to make sure that families follow through on getting forms in. Still, with the itinerant model of service delivery, contact with parents is probably minimal, if it occurs at all.

It would be interesting to compare the number of legally blind children registered at APH with the number of blind children who are registered with NLS. I do not know what the registration of school-age children for library service is, but I bet it is not very high. People wanting to do research among otherwise able-bodied blind children who are braille readers have a difficult time because there just are not that many

subjects available. The situation is changing, though, because there seem to be more preschool, otherwise normal, blind children using the services of Blind Babies Foundation.

I approve of talking books and tapes; I have always felt that listening is reading, just as reading braille and reading print are reading. Many people do not agree; they consider a blind child who does not read either print or braille illiterate. But it seems to me that congenitally visually impaired children should, if at all possible, use either braille or print as their primary mode of both recreation and learning. Whichever one is chosen does not have to be the only mode. The reason that I would still emphasize braille with young kids is that braille is an easily accessible mode of communication.

When I teach braille to my students, I emphasize that I consider it extremely important that young children become really good braille readers, if that is the appropriate mode for them. I understand that by the time these children get to be adults their primary recreational reading or even informational reading will be auditory, but they need to learn braille because it will be an extremely important skill for them to possess. But I understand that when a braille-reading student reaches high school, the amount of material to absorb becomes so voluminous that it is impractical to rely solely on braille reading anymore. The process is too slow and all assignments are not available in braille. Yet students who are really comfortable with braille can listen to a tape or a record or a live reader and take notes in braille. When they have an essay or a theme to do they will make their notes first in braille and then type the essay. Braille is constantly in use.

But when the English teacher in the eleventh grade assigns a novel to be read in two weeks, and perhaps it is not even available in braille, the students will turn to either a reader or a recording. The average reading rate in braille of a high school student may be around 100 words a minute, compared with an average of 175 words a minute that most of us gain aurally, so right away the speed with which the audio material is gained is almost double the speed with which braille information is gained. And some students in high school can read up to 300 words a minute with machines that compress speech, so if students can get their material at 300 words a minute instead of reading braille at 100 words a minute, it is obvious why almost no college texts are in braille.

Most university and college students will get their material either

through readers or on tape, but the best university students augment their listening with note taking on slate and stylus. Visually handicapped students at the high school or college levels have experienced a very good learning-to-listen program. We have discovered fairly recently that blind children are not automatically better listeners than other people, so we have to teach them how to listen. Blind students should be adept at using a braille writer and a slate and stylus, and they should learn how to type, because that is their only means of communication with sighted people.

Teachers

Our student teachers are not taught to provide general support to families; nor are they taught to provide information and referral beyond the teaching they do in the classroom. They probably ought to be taught these things. A question on our master's comprehensive exam poses this situation: "You're employed by the school district in such and such a city that has never had a program before, and the administrator says you are free to set up whatever you want. What would you set up and what would you use as your rationale for what you did?" The answer we are seeking is along these lines: "I would find out as much information as I could about the children, where they lived, what their needs were, and what the degree of vision loss was. Then I would set up this kind of model with this kind of service delivery system."

When we talk about projects such as the Living Skills Center in class, I spend time with students trying to stimulate their sensitivity to the needs of their future students—and encouraging them to find creative solutions to the problems we discuss—but that is about as far as our program goes. If a graduate of our program identifies a serious service need that is not being met, I cannot say that he did this because we taught him how.

In California, students must have regular teaching credentials before they even get into our program, and traditionally we have assumed that by the time people get to us they are already teachers of reading. Our job is to teach these people the adaptations. We also tend to assume that our students picked up all the techniques for teaching reading in the elementary education department, but of course they have not. And we probably ought to more thoroughly review with our students the techniques of teaching good reading.

Developing New Materials

Traditionally in both public and residential schools, we have tended to use materials that have been adapted, not created. I have always maintained that we are a profession of curriculum adapters, not curriculum developers; we just take the current reading series from Lippincott or Scott, Foresman and put the books into braille. And we simply transcribe a good recreational reading book into braille and assume that it is going to be appropriate. Only in very recent years have some of us begun to explore the idea of curriculum development specific to visually handicapped kids. The two examples that come to mind are SAVI (Science Activities for the Visually Impaired) and *Patterns*.

When SAVI was first funded, it was known as ASMB, or Adapting Science Materials for the Blind. The developers took the Science Curriculum Improvement Study program that had been developed at the Lawrence Hall of Science (Berkeley, Calif.) and tried to adapt it for the blind. But the product was a failure—nobody used it. So the developers said, "If we are not going to look at existing curricula but are going to develop some really good hands-on science experience material, what should we develop?" The answer was SAVI, which has nothing whatever to do with a sequential science curriculum in a regular classroom—so it is unique as well as extremely valuable.

Patterns is the first sequential reading series that has been developed specifically for blind children and it is in braille. Hilda Caton at the University of Louisville was the primary author, and I was a consultant along with a number of other people. *Patterns* did two things that I thought needed to be done with braille for a long time: (1) For years we have known that braille contractions vary in difficulty. For example, one of the first characters that a child meets in the first Scott, Foresman preprimer is Sally. Well, the "lly" contraction is one of the most difficult braille contractions; nonetheless, we introduced it right away because we are adapting Scott, Foresman. In contrast, *Patterns* offers a sequential reading series that avoids difficult contractions in the early stages of learning to read. (2) In beginning reading experiences, blind children are most motivated by a controlled vocabulary that consists primarily of action verbs and common nouns. They get such a vocabulary in *Patterns*. A child needs to identify with the stories, but a preprimer adapted from a book designed for children who can see makes absolutely no sense without pictures. So the blind child sits with a first-grade preprimer and

reads, "See Sally, see Sally run." If the blind child has a vivid imagination, the child can fill in what is going on. The teacher may try to describe the pictures, but often they depict scenes that a blind child is unfamiliar with. So the whole experience can be relatively meaningless, and it hardly encourages the child to read. In contrast, the emphasis in *Patterns* and in other materials that follow the same approach is on what is real for blind children at their particular stages of development.

Perhaps NLS could take the ideas presented in *Patterns* and hire some good writers—or use creative volunteers—to produce materials specifically for braille-reading children—materials that contain exciting experiences with objects that are real to them, objects that they can get their hands on and things that they know about. Remember that the functionally blind child who reads braille knows less of the real world than do children who have low vision and other children who may be served by the library. The writers could also examine the vocabulary introduced in *Patterns* and develop recreational reading materials using that vocabulary. The writers must make the stories interesting for the children—and put some blind children into the stories. Some commercial reading series are doing this now, but more needs to be done. My main approach in teaching young children who are braille readers was to use the experience story. This approach sacrifices the controlled vocabulary, but the kids became highly motivated to read when they could read their own creations. They escaped the drudgery of reading preprimers day after day or reading isolated words that made no sense to them; they were not reading about concepts or experiences they could not relate to.

One volunteer group does some wonderful prereading stuff—such as making tiny books that have two pieces of ribbon glued to a page and asking, "Which ribbon is longer?" I have strong feelings against producing raised-line illustrations to represent pictures to blind children—I am referring to three-dimensional outlines of a house, lawn, tree, car, hill, sun setting behind the hill, and so on. We should not impose a visual world on children who not only do not need that world but who are going to get confused about what their real world is if all these raised-line drawings are introduced to them. On philosophical grounds, my objection has something to do with respecting the dignity of blindness. From the practical standpoint, I believe that there is a fine line between what can be presented in raised-line illustrations and what cannot. Raised-line illustrations can help in math and science. A child can get a general idea

of the location of various parts of an amoeba from a three-dimensional reproduction of a cross section. And three-dimensional isosceles triangles, parallelograms, and things like that have some uses. Perhaps we should become a little more pictorially oriented in our raised-line illustrations, but first we must develop a standard graphic language so that a certain raised-line configuration consistently represents the same thing. We could then say, "Here is a set of symbols which, when presented graphically to visually handicapped readers, will always mean the same thing." For example, an isosceles triangle could be used to represent a tree. We do not need to put a big pseudo-tree with appendages all over the braille page. I think some work on standard symbols has been done in England, but nothing has come of it.

Learning-Disabled Children

My own philosophy of special education and the needs of handicapped children has always been that specific handicapped children have unique needs. If you really consider what the lack of visual input does to a person's concept development and to understanding the world, you realize that there is no way to equate that situation to the concept development of a learning-disabled child who can see. At the same time, learning-disabled people have, on occasion, found our materials helpful. Years ago, when I was at the School for the Blind, the director of special education from a neighboring town came to see me and said, "We have a large group of learning-disabled children at the senior high level who have never learned to read. We've worked with them for years and they are just not able to read print. They are good listeners, though, and maybe they would benefit from receiving material auditorially like the blind children." We lent him a lot of material and his plan worked really well for about a year and a half.

But I have a feeling that this approach is not working with learning-disabled children today for two reasons: (1) The word that this is an alternative for reading print is not getting out to teachers of learning-disabled children, especially at the junior and senior high levels when the teachers start giving up on reading. For this approach to work, there would have to be some public relations work with a whole different group of people. (2) It would be even more difficult to convince a teacher of learning-disabled children that listening is reading than to convince a teacher of the visually handicapped. The idea that you can learn

a lot about your world through hearing—in fact, that you can get many of the same materials that would be in print in a different mode—is probably still new to teachers of the learning-disabled, too new for them to understand that it is a viable alternative. And, of course, learning-disabled children's conceptualization of the world is different from a visually handicapped child's. Learning-disabled children are familiar with the visual world, so they don't need to focus in on action verbs such as *run* and *jump* or common nouns.

The Need for Basic Research

The profession that serves blind children and adults has always been a practitioner profession rather than a research profession. So all of us tend to be busy maintaining the system rather than trying to figure out ways of making it better. And that is one of the reasons why teachers of the visually handicapped have always been adapters and not developers of curriculum.

There is no question that technological advances in communications and mobility will profoundly affect the lives of blind people. But many of the potential gains to be made by the technological research are negated by the lack of basic research into the learning processes of blind children. We do not know how they process information because we have not fully researched the question. We assume that if we present certain information auditorially or tactually it will be received in such a way that it will give the blind children the same experience as the sighted children, just through different senses. We do not know, however, that our assumption is true. We know little about either receptive or expressive processing by blind children; research could be done in this area. We need a really good longitudinal study—fifteen or sixteen years of following the same children from infancy, observing their behavior, and recording it systematically. Then we can say, "This is what we know about how this child received and processed information," and we can discuss which adaptations worked and which ones did not. We could well discover that we have been teaching blind kids all wrong, that there are far better or different ways to teach them. But we will never find out unless we commit money to research—and right now that would mean taking money away from technology. We would have to set some other goals aside for a long time and say, "We really need to

get into the heads of those blind children and find out what makes them tick."

I have long wondered what kind of mental imagery congenitally blind, totally blind children have. I've asked a lot of young blind people what they remember about me, and their answers are interesting. You might expect that voice, smell, maybe some tactual contact would trigger their memories, but more often they mention some experience they had with me—both the setting and the activity. They might remember that we were in a quiet room with a noise in the background, that it was raining outside, and that we were talking about so and so. I have had a blind person say to me, "Do you remember on November the 8th in 1959, it was two o'clock in the afternoon on a Tuesday and we were doing math, and you showed me how to factor a fraction?" And I think, "How in the world did he do that?" But if you think of memory as coming from a blind person's memory file rather than a sighted person's memory file, it makes a lot of sense.

The Problem of Time

With what we know about learning, most teachers would agree that both reading and socializing are important, and that the blind child can experience many things in this world only vicariously, through reading. As a result, for the blind child, reading is more important, in many ways, than socializing. A college graduate I knew very well—he had been my student in elementary school—once told me, "I graduated in the top 10 percent of my class, but this is what I had to do in order to do that: I got on the bus in the morning, went to school, and went to classes all day. After school was out I got on the bus, went home, and studied from four until six. I had dinner from six until seven. I studied again from seven until eleven and then I went to bed. My recreational and social skills were nil because I had no contact with all those wonderful sighted peers for which public school programs were developed—no contact other than sitting in class with them. They were not my friends; there was no socialization, or rather, socialization seldom took place because there was no time for it. You know, in retrospect, it would have been a good idea for me to spend an extra year in high school, not because I was not bright enough to finish on time, but because the mechanics of learning were more cumbersome and bulky for me and learning simply takes me longer. I had an English teacher who

required fifteen novels to be read in a semester. My classmates would sit down and read them at their convenience, over lunch or wherever they happened to be. I went home and either listened to them on tape (and this was before compressed speech) or I read them in braille." And this particular man was an outstanding braille reader; he was clocked at 200 words a minute. But even so, his sighted contemporaries were reading at 500 words a minute.

The fact is, however, that if we ask a sixteen-year-old blind person today, "Why don't we give you a little more time in school, let you be in the chess club or the ham radio club after school and take five years to get out of high school instead of four?" that sixteen-year-old is going to say, "No way!" To the student, the idea of taking an extra year in school is tantamount to saying that he is not capable and competitive with his peers. One of the unfortunate outcomes of mainstreaming is that we put an enormous amount of pressure on blind children.

To illustrate the problem of time, let's imagine there are twelve braille-reading young people at McAteer High School in San Francisco who read almost exclusively for academic purposes, but who have the potential to really broaden their knowledge of the world with much more recreational reading. Suppose a librarian called up their resource teacher and said, "Let's set up a system to stimulate reading. If you will bring all your kids to the library for two hours a week, we'll expose them to the richness of the world through literature." The teacher will answer, "First, I have no way of providing transportation. Second, there is no time. And besides, the children are already overworked." As far as the teachers are concerned the library has pretty low priority. Still, if librarians can convince teachers of that richness that can be found in expanding one's reading beyond the academic requirements, they would certainly be doing those children a big favor. But, how can such reading be worked into the students' schedule when they spend five days a week – working twelve-hour days – totally immersed in keeping up with classwork and academic assignments? When Saturday rolls around, I would rather see the blind child out playing in a park, swimming, or cross-country skiing than sitting in a library.

I do not mean to imply that coming to the library is a bad thing. On the contrary. But given the competing demands on students' time, perhaps librarians can visit the high schools. To help stimulate interest, they can take along an adult blind person who loves to read and who can

speak enthusiastically about novels and nonfiction and history books. If a kid then says, "I don't care about reading, I want to hear from somebody who knows how to fix the carburetor in a 1949 Ford," maybe the librarian can find somebody who can do that, too.

IMPROVING LIBRARY SERVICE FOR VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

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There are a number of ways to improve the library program for blind children.

Improving Equipment

First, we need to develop some good ways to introduce children to the world of mechanics, which would include the skills that they need to master. It would be easy to do, if we begin by working with the children so that they can turn the cassette machine on successfully. Then we need to teach them how to turn it off and gradually handle all the other functions. As it is, they are overwhelmed because the machine is pushed at them by people who generally are not cassette machine users and do not understand equipment. In addition, children have problems if they are faced at school with equipment that is too complicated to use, or if the teacher explains the use of the equipment inadequately or too quickly, and then they come home to a totally different piece of equipment.

The cassette machine is poorly designed. The pause control that is standard on school equipment should be a feature on NLS equipment for children, because it eliminates the necessity for young children to rewind the machine and go forward.

The library could also include with each machine a braille or large-print reference sheet that reminds children what the symbols on the cassette machine buttons stand for. People who read as many hours as I

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do with a cassette machine have memorized the symbols, but children who use the machine for a while and then go to another piece of equipment need that kind of reference when they come back to the library machine. It is much easier to understand and remember how to use a button that says "play" than one that says "0," which someone told you three weeks ago meant "play." To help children become independent, maybe we should add a raised-print word that says "play" next to the symbol. We talk about independence but we foster dependency whenever we put out a product that requires memorization of operation.

We also need much more practice with and training in variable speed, because many children get bored with the slow speed. With a good curriculum they could have fun with the machine. The teacher could say, "I'm going to make the tape recorder sound funny," then speed it up and ask the child, "Can you imitate what I just did?" We should let blind children have fun with the equipment. However, most parents do not understand library services and feel responsible for the equipment. I would guess that 98 percent of the parents think that if the equipment breaks they will have to replace it. Hence, adults tend to say, "Don't break it! It's an expensive piece of equipment!" Maybe we need more durable machinery for young children.

Improving Materials

It would also be helpful if the copyright information were put right at the beginning of the taped book. We are trying to teach our students to be discriminating in their choice of information, so I have students listen to a chapter of a book and then ask them, "'What did you think about the ideas?" And sometimes the student will say, "The ideas are really good!" And then we will discover that the book was written in 1932! Frequently I will want students to verify that the books they are reading are appropriate for the reports they are doing. Nine times out of ten they need to know copyright information and the qualifications of the author, neither of which are readily available on taped books.

It is hard to nurture the joy of reading in young children when all you have to work with are braille bumps on a page. And it is hard to feel emotionally involved with a cold piece of equipment like the cassette machine, or with a cassette or braille book. If you look at a picture of a soft, fuzzy rabbit in a book and you remember having such a rabbit a couple of years before, you are going to relate to that book because of

the picture. Neither braille books nor cassettes give children that element, but they should. But I believe if more real objects were included with the braille and recorded books, reading would become fun for blind children. When I sent out a braille book about a duck, for instance, I would put a toy duck with real feathers in the box with the book. Or, if I had a braille book about Johnny's new shoes, I would include a collection of shoestrings of various kinds in the box with the book. This would not only make that book a pleasure to anticipate, but it would also aid concept development. With a book on Sammy the Seal, a little rubber seal could be included in the mailing container. The blind child could take that seal to school to show to classmates and would feel important when siblings ask, "What did you get in the box this time?" We might lose a few Sammy Seals, but it would be worth the price if we could begin to get children excited about reading through this kind of salesmanship.

All kinds of concepts can be lost in reading without the pictorial representation. I am not advocating raised pictures; most teachers find that the raised pictures do not enhance reading but tend to hinder it, because hardly any of those complicated raised pictures can be interpreted tactually. But it is very important for us to bridge the gap between object perception and straight braille reading in order to make reading a more independent experience for blind children. Very young sighted children have hundreds of pictorial books that are relevant to their level of experience and understanding. But, for example, the little beginner book with a picture of a honey pot that the little bears have tipped over is totally ineffective in braille. The braille text says, "Oh dear! No, no!" Children who pick up the book and read that do not understand what is happening, unless they are fortunate enough, or maybe unfortunate enough, to have a sighted person around to explain what is in the picture, and in so doing remind them that they are missing something because they are blind.

In my curriculum class I advocate that my students prepare what I call "talking picture books." To do that they take a print picture book that seems appropriate for a beginning reader and braille what is in the literary portion of the book. Maybe one page says, "Mother! Mother! Help! Help!" That is all they braille. They do not braille a description of the picture because at this level the words are beyond the child's reading vocabulary. The next step is to make a companion tape recording to

stimulate the braille reading. The tape will say, "*The Big Honey Hunt*, page two. Mother Bear and Daddy Bear and Little Bear are in the kitchen and the honey pot is empty." Then a bell rings, telling the children to stop the tape and go back to the braille book to read what the bears said next. The tape-recorded segments set the pictorial scene while the braille adds the narration. I have used these talking picture books for fifteen years with children, and the children love them because they can be completely independent when they read. This helps them remain motivated to read because they can sit with a tape recorder, a pair of earphones, and a braille book in a regular classroom. I think that true reading is—or should be—a very personal and private experience.

One of my other concerns is that exposure to too many talking books at a young age may cause children to neglect their braille reading skills. Obviously it is more interesting to listen to a well-read tape than to read a braille book that makes no sense because the pictorial representation is poor.

I am convinced that talking books are important because if we do not capture reading enthusiasm early, the rest of what the child does in school becomes remedial reading. Also, although we can use talking books in clever ways to stimulate listening skills, I do not want talking books to be used as an escape. We really need to promote braille skills because we have discovered over the years that the students who are educated only with tape recordings do not seem, on the whole, to have the literacy skills that they need for adult independent living. And they certainly do not have the vocational skills they need. New technologies make it easier to produce braille; now we need to make children eager to read it. And we have to be sure that the books they read contain experiences that blind children can relate to. Consider the story about the little girl who puts up her umbrella in the rain. The umbrella has a hole in it and the picture shows the rain coming through the hole. If you have not experienced that, and you cannot see the picture, the story is rather meaningless.

People need to be trained to create appropriate pictorial descriptions for the talking books. We do not need to say that Mother Bear is in the kitchen and she has on a blue dress and an apron with little flowers on it and a yellow daisy in the upper left-hand corner. We have to describe what is meaningful to a blind child—usually the action or the emotion, not a detailed description of the surroundings. There are so many things

that blind children can and do enjoy that we should not waste their time and damage their self-image by constantly bombarding them with reminders of what they cannot do and cannot enjoy. If a book is funny because when somebody tried to pour milk, it went all over the table, it is not important to say, "It was a birthday party and there were balloons on the ceiling and everybody had on a funny hat."

There is a danger in assuming that blind children gain more pleasure from reading if the books they are listening to are presented dramatically. If a book is read too dramatically, children will sit back and be entertained. The experience is comparable to listening to a concert rather than playing in the symphony. But if materials are properly prepared readers have the pleasure of participating, and the only way they can participate is through interpretation, unless they are reading braille or doing something physical. A well-written book allows readers to bring to it their own emotions, which are based on their own experiences. A taped book can be ruined if it is interpreted according to the narrator's experience.

I always proceed on the premise that handicapped children and able-bodied children gain similar pleasures from similar activities. Sighted readers may learn to love to read when sitting on their mothers' laps and being read to. This is a love-filled environment with mother-child bonding. Many times blind children are read to while held on their mothers' laps, but the mothers are reading print books and the children do not relate the print reading, which they cannot see going on, with love. So we encourage the use of Twin Vision books, in which the braille is on the same page as the print.

Improving Service Delivery

Talking Book Topics and *Braille Book Review* need to clearly differentiate between books to be read to children and books for children to read to themselves. Some books were not intended for children to read to themselves. The vocabulary is at a fourth-grade level, and the authors intended that the parents sit down with their children and read the books to them. I would like to see classification of books in the catalogs as follows: "books recommended for children who know these one hundred words, books for children who know these three hundred words, etc." This classification would give the teachers and librarians a structure to work within.

We have to approach the problem of children being motivated to read talking books from a remedial reading standpoint, which means that librarians must develop new programs to sell children on reading. One aspect of our salesmanship could be a very short book, five minutes long, that teachers and dormitory people could use and that the child could put in the tape machine and finish quickly with satisfaction. We are going to have to help teachers and care-givers learn how to operate the machines themselves, one step at a time, so that they feel comfortable with the machines and are more likely to help the children learn to use the NLS program. Most visually handicapped children have NLS machines and books pushed at them, but nobody sits down and helps the children learn to like to read. So we have to be more creative in our approach.

We have a huge core of interested, potential volunteers, such as teenage youngsters who are visually impaired and do not feel that they can contribute as much as other teenagers can. We could organize them as volunteers – it would be wonderful if we could pay them – to individualize reading for younger blind children. For example, a sixteen-year-old blind girl could record a tape for a younger blind girl: "Hi, Susie. I have this neat braille book in front of me. And I'm going to read it to you today. This tape is for Susie Johnson in Milwaukee, Wisconsin." That way we could personalize reading and do something that might also establish some models for the younger children. Mainstreaming is very important, but one of its weaknesses is that it does not provide blind children with models of high-functioning, older, visually impaired people.

We have to get educators, parents, and students excited about reading. And right now we have a gigantic remedial reading problem because the children have not been stimulated to read at the right level. Educators are overwhelmed with the number of things they need to do, and they may have assumed that encouraging reading was the librarians' job. But reading is an important living and survival skill, and children must learn how to fill their leisure time with meaning.

When sighted children whose parents read are taken to the grocery store, the parents may say, "Sit down and look at the books while we go get the apples." These children pull out books and can laugh and giggle with the pictures. It is a personal fun time. Blind children never have that experience.

I also think that shorter books for young children are important; many of the current books are far too long. Teachers are more likely to find time to help a child get started with a recorded book if the story lasts only fifteen or twenty minutes.

A child who is signed up for talking books will probably receive three cartons of materials and a new tape recorder in the first month. If the child's parents are sighted and do not use a tape recorder except at anniversary parties and birthdays, they may never have used the rewind button and may never have heard a tape that beeps. That much material, plus a machine, overloads teachers and parents. Parents have called me and said, "What did you get me into? I've got four boxes full of library stuff. I'm overwhelmed!" It might be better if the child were simply sent one book and the equipment during that first month. Then during the second month the child could be sent the sports bibliography, and in the third month, a list of juvenile titles.

Also, consider a thirteen-year-old with retinitis pigmentosa who is aware of large type and thrilled by it. The teacher has convinced the parents and the student that he would also benefit from, and enjoy, talking books. So he signs up. The first thing he will receive is a carton with braille on it. That will set the family and the child back psychologically. Of course, they have to learn to accept blindness, but they may not be ready to yet. In addition, receiving cartons of materials through the mail is foreign to sighted people, who usually get only personal correspondence and bills in the mail. And the fact that all this service is free must make many of them a little suspicious. Each introductory package should contain a short, clear statement to parents indicating why the library service was established and what the responsibilities of the parents are.

We keep preaching independence for students, but most of what we do fosters dependency in them, including the formats we choose for braille and recorded books and the equipment we give them that requires a sighted person to help them operate it. The children have the *Talking Book Topics* checklist, but most of them cannot fill it out with great confidence until they are in junior high school. What if the library allowed the children to send in cassettes listing the books they wanted? The library instructions could say, "This is what you have to tell us on your cassette: your name, your address, the book you want and whether it is in braille, talking book, or cassette." If a child sent in a cassette and

forgot to include the address, the library could send it back, saying, "We're sorry. We cannot take the information because you forgot your address." All this would take personnel, but it would get the children involved and it would be a wonderful learning experience. If children cannot master a cassette list, they are surely not going to be able to use the *Braille Book Review.*

The library could have a toll-free number that a child could call to ask questions such as, "What can I do with my cassette player? It's making a funny noise." The answer to this question may be in the introduction to the service, but the child is not going to remember that two months later when the machine begins to make a funny noise and Dad thinks it is going to explode.

The Teacher's Role

Special education teachers have little contact with parents of handicapped students, and most of them believe it is a sensitive matter to persuade parents to take an active role in library services. Parents are often uneasy about their child's medical condition, and they are usually working through other family problems as well. Maybe there are several other children at home, so who is the teacher to tell the parents that they should get involved in the library?

Again, salesmanship is important. Maybe librarians could put together a pamphlet for teachers to use with parents to answer specific questions and help parents feel comfortable with the program. Of course, the first trick would be for the teachers to get the children hooked on recorded and brailled books, so the children in turn would go home and say, "Oh, I really want to have my own library tape recorder. I know how to box the tapes, I can turn the label over, and all you have to do to send the book back to the library is drop it in the mailbox."

A colleague once said to me, "How can you afford the time to work with talking books?" And I said, "I can't afford not to." It depends on what the teacher sees as a priority. I do not see tape recorders and cassettes as fillers for unused time, although they can be used that way. I teach listening skills and appropriate behavior. I use tapes as rewards. I get the children hooked on a really good story and let them listen to that story when they get their work done. After they have listened to the book for a few minutes, the bell rings and the tape recorder gets turned off. Tears of disappointment may flow, but the next day the children

work even faster because they want to hear the end of the story. If you use reading this way, you are teaching children that reading is a leisure activity, but you should start with just a few minutes of leisure time. It is a mistake to hand children three long cassette books and say, "Take them to the mountains this weekend. Then you've at least got reading to do if there is nothing else interesting going on."

In this profession, we have a group of teachers who never listen to books themselves, who do not see reading as being important. Many people are not oriented to reading, although I am, not necessarily because I am blind. Each child should, at some point, be exposed to at least one teacher who is oriented to reading.

Educating the teachers is going to be the library's biggest chore. The library should have a series of informational postcards to send monthly to teachers. One postcard could say, "Be sure that your students know that their cassette player has a rechargeable battery." That is all the card needs to say; teachers are not going to read long notices or *News in Brief*. Another postcard could say, "These are the most popular holiday books for children. Please order for your students by December 1st." The teachers might not know that these books are available on tape or in braille. The library must spoonfeed the teachers and the parents, who are the only links between the library and the children it serves.

LEARNING DISABILITY: THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

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How well learning-disabled children—the ones that pediatricians are interested in these days—are diagnosed in the public schools depends largely on where the children are located. Rural school systems in general are slower to recognize problems than inner-city systems where there are well-baby clinics and other agencies, even though the follow-through in the inner city is bad. But suburban community pediatricians

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recognize most learning-disabled children early, at preschool age, particularly if there are behavioral manifestations, such as hyperactivity.

When learning-disabled children enter school, they are either already labeled or they fall into one of two groups. Children in the first group present strange behaviors in school that they have not presented at home, such as mirror writing or an inability to stand in lines. Children in the second group seem to do everything well but cannot be taught to read. Current practice recommends that learning-disabled children be caught in kindergarten or first grade in the prereading process. They will definitely be identified by third or fourth grade, when self-initiated reading takes place; many times learning-disabled children make it to the third or fourth grade without being diagnosed and then their cry for help is too great for us to fail to notice the problem.

But the label *learning disabled* is a mosaic, with no diagnostic specificity. It is not a diagnostic tool, nor does it suggest a specific prognostic statement about the child. This problem is manifest at two levels: state and school system. Different states label children differently. Western Wisconsin, for example, has a ratio of three learning-disabled children to every retarded child. Across the state line in Minnesota, where there is a tighter definition of learning disability, the figures are almost reversed. In short, a child living on the river in Hudson, Wisconsin, who crosses over into St. Paul, Minnesota, is going to have a different label there. The label and the quality, type, and amount of service—three different dimensions—are not captured at all in the definition. Even type and amount of service, leaving the more abstract "quality" out, are not consistent. The amount of consulting service across the United States and the amount of special education programming across the United States are irrelevant.

In addition to the variation among states, the definition of learning disability in some cases is not uniform within the same school system. I have seen children with IQs of 110 who had perceptual or language problems go from school A, where the mean IQ was 85 or 90, to school B, where the mean IQ was 120 and the other children were from a different, environmentally stimulated background. These children were not considered learning disabled in school A but were considered learning disabled in school B.

A good example of this labeling problem is found in rich suburban school systems. When the federal government first agreed to subsidize

school programs for the handicapped, assuming that 12 percent of any student body was handicapped, the rich school districts reported on their forms that 12 percent of their students were learning disabled. They did not want to admit to having children in any of the other handicapped categories. They did not report any children with behavioral disorders, or mentally handicapped children, or children with speech or communication disorders, so 12 percent were reported totally as learning disabled. Actually, the learning disabled should have constituted 1 to 2 percent. But, learning-disabled children are the only handicapped children who are acceptable in the suburban bridge club set. In fact, learning disabilities are used to excuse many problems.

Special education funding has grown in such quantum leaps that it has caught the attention of too many people. If we are going to treat a whole group of children who are "educationally handicapped" under the rubric of "special education," I think we have set ourselves up for a tremendous backlash because special education teachers will soon be teaching a majority of children.

Special education is, by definition, the adaptation of curricula. There is no special education curriculum; it is everybody else's adapted. And in that respect I think it is possible that brailling and some of the sensory devices that have been developed in the name of modern technology could provide clear-cut alternatives for some of the terribly brain-damaged children.

But the definition of learning disability cannot continue without a prognostic statement. In its crudest form, at least, the prognostic statement must say something about the type and amount of remediation and must recognize some very simple things about learner preferences and the terribly important adaptability factor in curricula.

The federal government, with its regulations and definitions, is reactive, not proactive. Government officials liked to give the appearance of being in a proactive role with learning disabilities in the 1960s and with the severely profoundly disabled in the 1970s, but they were not. There is a very low correlation between the expenditure of money and the results in education. The federal government and the bureaucratic agencies that do not talk to one another respond greatly to political pressures and societal phenomena, and learning disability is a societal phenomenon.

We have spent $5 million a year on four or five research and develop-

ment centers for learning disability across the country, and nobody knows what they are doing. In fact, they have not done anything. Their mandate was to stabilize the phenomenon of learning disability, gather data on it, and make it more manageable. What they have done is reflect the state of the art; they have not peeled back any hide on the problem to say, "Here's a place where we can get into it."

It would have been very simple to put more teeth into the short- and long-term objectives in the Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act) legislation. What we did, though, was to reinforce bad behavior. We told people, "Forget the long-term objectives, pay attention to the short-term objectives," because the short-term objectives would be easier to plan for and achieve than the long-term objectives. We should have demanded long-term planning, but we didn't. Hence there is no real educational focus or career development for the child except for the next fifteen minutes or fifteen days. That is very defeating and takes away from the prognostic indicator that I have referred to. Some general questions need to be asked: Academically or vocationally, by a certain grade, given a particular type and amount of remediation, what does anybody guess this child will do? We need to begin to guess the answers to these questions, because it is costing the taxpayer much money when we do not. The child needs educational continuity, but continuity in educational programs is a figment of our imaginations.

The first thing to realize about training teachers is that everything associated with education is in a highly fluid state. But it is very difficult to get that message across to people who want a cookbook. The second thing to realize—so simple and yet we do not grasp it—is that progress in this field is influenced more by what happens outside education than by what happens inside. For example, suppose Libya bombed Egypt, we did something in response, and Russia did something in response to us. If we needed more money for munitions, then the tap of money for programs for the handicapped, learning disabled in particular, would probably be closed off. The current state of the art is constricted within a broad band of sociological aspects of education; it is not part of any kind of educational gerrymandering based on reason, data, or viewpoint.

There are thirty-one training institutions in Wisconsin alone and probably the majority of them have learning disability programs. But there are not thirty-one people in Wisconsin who can train teachers of the learning disabled. We ought to cut the number of training programs by a

third and get the more reasonable people teaching. Instead, we have people in training programs who are sensitive only to the student's and the employer's desire for the student to enter the school system with a cookbook. Special education is not a thinking person's game. Teachers do not read to broaden themselves. They enter the field of teaching at the minimum professional level. And the in-service training we provide has been horrifying. It would be nice if we could mandate even a permissive way to expose some of these trainers to a greater breadth of ideas.

Staff people in most schools in the United States probably could not define "learning disabilities" if they were asked. The special educators there might quote the federal definition, but if you said to them, "What does that mean operationally in your building?" they would be struck dumb.

Some people do write decent articles on education and the journals print the best of what they get, but there is no solidarity of approach. There is too much confusion in the legislation, both federal and state.

There have been a couple of nationwide curriculum reviews. I have not seen any now for several years, but the two summary statements I remember were (1) that learning disability teachers, particularly the consultants, tend to use what they have been trained to use and feel comfortable using and they do not change their approach much as time passes, and (2) that what changes they do make in their first three years of teaching tend to make the curriculum more structured and oriented toward tear-out workbooks. In another study researchers found that the special education consultants were using tear-out workbooks for 90 percent of their curriculum.

Other people are more optimistic than I am, because I am an observer. You see, special education to me is only an ideology, when it should be a concrete curriculum, with exact diagnosis and long-range planning. Yet in many places the status of special education is that of an educational welfare system. As long as that attitude persists and special education does not have its own curriculum but only inferior adaptations of the curriculum of other disciplines, the situation of educating the learning disabled will not improve and special education cannot take its place with regular vocational education. I have many problems with this field, but not many people share my misery.

HOW BLIND CHILDREN UNDERSTAND LANGUAGE

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In my doctoral work I pulled together several of my areas of interest: the visually handicapped, cognitive development, language development, and the preschool years. Using what I called "more tangible objects" (things that children could hold in their hands, such as balls, pencils, spoons, cups) and "less tangible objects" (things that could be felt but not held, such as trees, cars, houses) I studied how congenitally blind children attach meaning to these words. The responses of the congenitally blind children to tests using these objects were compared with the responses of sighted children at similar ages.

Nobody had worked on the cognitive development of blind children below the age of six; nor had anybody even looked at language at that young age. Since language – the understanding of words and the mental representations of those words – is related to cognitive development, I thought that delayed cognitive development, which earlier research had found in older visually handicapped children, would result in a different understanding of common objects. Also, because these children could not see certain objects, such as the spoon or the house, they might have mental images of the objects that were different from the images of sighted children. I did not find this to be true, however. In fact, I found that, at least with the younger children, we appear to be overemphasizing the role that vision plays. It is really the tactual experience with the object that is important in determining how well children understand what it is.

In my study, blind and sighted children described the objects on my list. I found that there was no overall difference between the blind and the sighted children in the number of words used, other than words describing color, which would be expected. Many of the attributes the children listed, whether they were blind or sighted, came from their tactual experiences with the object. What they did with the object, or what they could do with it, and what they could have learned through touching it were all mentioned.

I had the children in both groups tell me what an object was, without having it there to look at or touch. Then, with the more tangible objects – the pencil, the ball, the cup – I first had the children describe the objects to me, then I gave them the objects to hold and asked them to describe some more. I could therefore compare what they said from verbal recall and from tactual experience. And again, there was no significant difference between the blind and the sighted children.

My study indicates that we really should not be concerned about communication. Blind children talk about the same things as sighted children as long as they have experienced those things. This underscores the need to provide concrete, actual experiences for blind and sighted children alike. They should use a ball, for example, and not just read about it in a book.

Once I visited a program for handicapped preschool children. One of the children was blind and the rest were sighted but had other problems. They were sitting around in a group talking about an egg beater, which is no longer a common household object. The teacher demonstrated the egg beater and then passed it around to the group. The blind child could not relate to what they were talking about; he also was the last child in the group to get his hands on the egg beater. That made me think about what we are doing for blind children in our schools. It is important that the children get a chance to experience objects, particularly less tangible objects. If the teacher cannot actually bring a car into the classroom, the teacher has to take the children to where it is and let them explore it with whatever senses are appropriate for them.

Teachers of all kinds of exceptional children all talk about providing concrete, actual experiences and teaching through manipulative objects rather than just pictures or talk. Everybody agrees with this approach, but not everyone applies it in the classrooms. For example, teachers of retarded children talk about using concrete objects for mathematics, but the concrete objects they use are number lines taped on the children's desks. These lines are not concrete, not manipulative at all. The number lines presuppose a higher level of understanding than some of those retarded children are ready for. I am afraid that this kind of lip service is found in many programs.

If the enjoyment of books is dependent on prior experiences of the child, and if a blind child has not had those experiences, books are unappealing. The same thing would happen if a blind child went to see a

movie that was a visual fantasy. The child would not have experienced the fantasy, and would not be able to enjoy the visual images on the screen.

In my study, even those objects in the "less tangible" category were still concrete. It is possible that in abstract or intangible things, such as air, sky, and sun, or objects that are less common, definite gaps would appear between the understanding of the blind child and that of the sighted child. Or there might be a gap between the understanding of the sighted adult working with the blind child and that of the blind child. We may assume that blind children understand certain things, and when we explain them we may still be using words that do not coincide with the blind child's experience.

One day, one of the children I worked with, who was about five years old, was playing and rolling Play-Doh in his hands as we talked about other things. At one point he stopped in the middle of what we were talking about, put the ball of Play-Doh down, and said, "I'll be right back." I said, "Where are you going?" He just repeated, "I'll be right back." But he did not move. He sat there on the floor, picking the Play-Doh from under his fingernails. After a minute or two he said, "I'm back," and picked up the ball of Play-Doh. It occurred to me that he had heard his mom, dad, or others say, "I'll be right back," but never actually experienced their leaving the room.

THOUGHTS FROM AN ITINERANT TEACHER

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We are considered itinerant teachers in that we go to the children wherever they are in school. I work in two counties with seventeen visually handicapped children, ranging from babies to twelfth-graders. How they react to talking books varies with the child; I have some children who use the books often and some who never use them. Children's interest in talking books depends chiefly on the severity of their vision loss. I have a totally blind student in high school who loves to get talking books. She orders them and reads them on her own, which I think is great. It is not easy to figure out some of those textbook tapes,

but she has figured them out, using her own method. I have no worries because I know that she knows what she is doing.

I have to maintain a good rapport with the children's teachers and I try very hard to do that. I have several students with six or seven teachers apiece and I have to tell all those teachers what materials I can get for them. I tell the teachers at the beginning of the year about the children's visual problems and explain what to look for. Then I go back weekly and say, "What are you all doing and what do you all need?" I have had no problems with mainstreaming and teachers, but one of the itinerant teachers right now is having a problem with a kindergarten teacher whose only teaching materials are dittoed copies that are hard for the visually impaired to read. This teacher does not want to change what she has been doing for fifteen years for the benefit of children who cannot see the dittoes. I have never had that problem. I have had teachers say, "I'm nervous about having a visually impaired child in my class," but no one has ever said to me, "I don't want a visually handicapped child in my class." This teacher is refusing to accept a blind child in her class.

I have no students who use the talking book center in person, although I did bring one child to the library so that she could see what was available and where her books come from. My students live so far away that few of them come to Athens often. I have two girls going into the eighth grade who live in Athens, but I do not think that they would use the talking book library, because they can still read regular print, although it is not easy for them. They can still go to the regular library at school or in town. They use the school library all the time. In my middle schools I have placed large-print dictionaries and at the high school, a mammoth braille dictionary. If the children want to use the cassette encyclopedia, they have to come to the talking book center to use it.

If a teacher tells me she is assigning a certain book, I can telephone the talking book center staff and they will get it for me. I have received fantastic service. A few times the book has come from Florida, which takes a little longer, but the library service has been very good and my children have been very fortunate to have it.

When visually handicapped students get to middle school and high school their time is very limited. The totally blind high school student I work with tapes her classes and then goes back over all the tapes to pick out the important things that were said, skipping over those few minutes

when the teacher was fussing at Tommy, and so on. But she has to go through all that listening, which is time-consuming. And she does not like books on records. In fact, all of the children prefer cassettes.

We work hard to improve the listening skills of young children. Most of my children are in middle school now, so I am not directly involved in teaching listening skills. I also have many multiply handicapped children who probably never will use talking books because they are so severely mentally retarded that they are solely existing. Two in the nursing home are wards of the state. Their parents said, "Here, take them." I also have two children who are living at home who do not even know that the world is turning.

We work very much with listening skills. That is very important. I think my high school student has superb listening skills. She has learned that that is how she has to do it. The two girls in middle school have good listening skills. The listening skills of the little fellow in middle school are not that good but he is an immature little boy. And I think if he had perfect vision his listening skills would not be much better. It just depends on the child.

I worry about these children the way I do about my own children at home. I want them to be well rounded. Both of my own children are good readers, but I like to see them play basketball, too, and that is my approach with my school children. I think one of my students sits too much with her cassette player; she is overweight and lacks self-confidence. She needs to get out more, but her mobility is very poor. She has been very, very protected. If I were her mother I would push her out of the nest. But we have scheduled mobility training worth $2,000 for her next year. The teacher has to come from Atlanta because there is no one in this area who is trained to teach mobility. Yet this girl should have had mobility training years ago.

We teach what we call prebraille skills to the younger children, teaching them circles and squares and using braille dots that are spaced further apart than normal.

We work very closely with the health departments in the counties, but we do not get many referrals from them. I wish the ophthalmologists would routinely call us and say, "I've just examined a child's eyes and I think you ought to serve him." We also work closely with the hospital here in Athens; if a child is born with any problems we find out about it. Many of the mothers in small towns come to Athens to have their

babies, so we find out about the children from various sources.

I think that in the South the term "learning disability" is relatively new. All of a sudden everybody has a learning disability. I suppose someone might say I have a learning disability, too, because I cannot read maps. I guess we all have learning disabilities. But my student in the eighth grade is showing signs of a learning disability and he is going to be evaluated. He has not been performing well for three years and it is hard to tell whether it is because he is a teenager or whether there is another problem. He came from a very small elementary school to a large middle school and all of a sudden there was no one running around helping him pick up his books and keep his things together. He has to do that on his own. So he had trouble adjusting and his grades kept falling. He seemed to be trying at times, but he was getting very frustrated with himself and his parents were getting frustrated, too. His father called me and said, "I am almost fixing to label my son retarded. I just don't know where to push him or how much." At that point I thought, we have to do something. We cannot sit back and let those parents say the boy is retarded.

We can never do enough for these children. And then sometimes, we have to try the impossible and keep on trying until we get something done.

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO SERVICE

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The problems with service delivery systems in large cities are as serious as, but quite different from, the problems in rural areas. The families' largest problem in rural areas seems to be transportation. That is the case in Kentucky and in the states with which I am familiar. Beyond that, I think that staff morale is the most important determinant of the quality of a service delivery system. Without a doubt, no matter what kind of service delivery system one has, one staff person who is energetic, committed, and interested can make the program work. Or

one staff person who does not have those characteristics or who is burned out can make a superior model, great facilities, and a high budget fail. We who are in teaching training institutions have an obligation to make sure that the people leaving our programs are the best people around.

Variation in the quality of personnel poses a significant problem for the Library of Congress and the talking books program. The service is very valuable, but when it is put in the hands of somebody at the local level who does not have the skill or the desire to publicize the service, the program is made to look very bad. I am sure that talking book and braille services and large-print books work best in communities where somebody who is committed to the program goes out and makes it work. If the program is to work, people need to know about it. I am not aware of efforts to publicize talking book services through articles in journals that reach educators and other interested professionals. I think such publicity might make quite a few more people aware of the services.

Also, providing service involves much more than just giving someone information. I tell my teachers that each family has problems in addition to the problems related to having a handicapped child in the family. Poor families, for example, which have an overrepresentation of handicapped children, have concerns about where they will get money for food, rent, clothing, and heat. And their desire to have the needs of their handicapped child met may have lower priority than some of those more basic concerns, in a pattern similar to Mazlow's hierarchy of needs. Biological needs come first.

If these families are to effectively meet the needs of their handicapped children, they need advocates. The advocates sometimes come from the welfare department, if the workers there are sensitive and empathetic, or sometimes from the health department or an educational agency or perhaps, in this case, from the library. But 98 percent of parents of handicapped children will not make a phone call on their own to find out where services are. And they will not call to try to get materials from a library because most of these parents are intimidated by libraries. They have never had a library card; they have never visited a library. And their own experiences in school have been so negative that they are afraid of going into a building associated with learning. So they need somebody who is going to guide them through the process of enrolling for service at the library. Consequently, I think that the information

about services is best put into the hands of professionals who can introduce the family to the library.

What makes professional people effective in this field is empathy, an ability to listen to and understand the larger problems that families have. I encourage my students to visit the homes of their children, so that they realize when a parent does not come to a parent-teacher conference at the school it may not be because the parent is not interested. Maybe the parent has other children at home and the car just broke down. Twenty-two-year-old teachers could learn much more much faster from visiting homes than from sitting in university classrooms for four years. I think once they see that the experiences of other families can be very different from their own upbringings, then either they will leave teaching, which might be a good move for some of them, or they will understand and really go out of their way to start meeting the real needs of families.

Most special education departments do not stress that aspect of teaching. They teach curriculum and how to use the materials; if the students know the materials and the curriculum, they graduate and are sent off to be very mediocre teachers. Schools are trying to maintain their traditional ways, but they are dealing with nontraditional families with nontraditional needs. Our old approach is not working. We need to do things differently.

Our professionals also need to meet the other people who are working with the same children and families. Agencies tend to be protective and insular, but the movement toward interagency coordination and cooperation, particularly in special education, is growing. The only way to improve services is to stop duplicating them and start understanding what other professionals are doing. In sum, we need personnel training programs that teach a new philosophy, not the same old social-work model, not the same old school counselor model, not the same old teacher model. The old model is a client-centered, nonecological model. The newer models are more ecologically oriented. They look around at what is happening in the individual's environment and deal with some of the problems in that environment. Walking into a housing project, one can quickly identify the groups that are going to be in special education programs as well as the families that will require lifelong public assistance. And if the apartment walls are thin and someone next door has a stereo blasting away twenty hours a day, how can the handicapped child listen to books?

THOUGHTS FROM A RESOURCE ROOM TEACHER

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Before I came to this school, the children's program at the regional library had been allowed to lapse. I started it again because I wanted the visually handicapped children to read; only one of them – Masumi – was a good reader and at that point even he was not a good, fluid reader. Guywood still has a hard time. His brailling skills are slow and part of it is that he does not read unless he has to. That is his main problem, so he does not get the practice he needs. If Guywood tried harder he would be a great braille reader. Masumi's mother makes him read a half hour a day during the school year and during the summer an hour a day. That is why his braille reading is so good.

Brandy is especially proud because she couldn't read before; her sight vocabulary was almost nil when I got her as a student. She was reading *On Cherry Street*, the beginning reader, and supposedly in the middle of the book. But when she read to me she would falter on every single word. I said, "Stop! We can't go on like this! She is not reading!" So we backtracked and it was good that we did. She did not have the experience of really reading, so it was easier to teach her from the very beginning. Her decoding skills are now very good. We just tested her and the SAT grade equivalent was 4.0, which means she is only a year behind; she is going to be in the fifth grade next year. Her reading comprehension is still slow but she is getting there. Brandy wanted to learn and she is proud of the fact that she can read. After all these years of being unable to read, she feels good to be able to do it now. Of the three girls, her decoding skills are the best; she knows what syllables are and she can break her words into syllables.

We read silently ten minutes a day after recess. It does not matter that some of the children do not read well and stumble over words; they still have to read silently for ten minutes after recess. I think the whole school has silent reading then.

The partially sighted children read very well, whereas the blind children have to know braille contractions, so reading is harder for

them. They have to learn much more. They can become proficient readers but many of the problems they have with braille reading come from carelessness on their part.

I think the children themselves have to want to read. If they do not want to read, there is nothing anybody can do to help them. For instance, Guywood never reads for pleasure. He does not even read magazines, although there are magazines available that I am sure he would love to read. Maybe he does not know about them. A seventh-grader I tutor who was in my class last year does not like to read either. Both he and Guywood were sighted at birth, so it is harder for them because they know what a sighted world is. They learned to read with print and it has been difficult for them to change over to braille. But Masumi, who has been blind since birth, learned braille more easily because he had never seen print.

I know that Guywood gets scared when he sees a fat book. He thinks, "I don't want to read that. It has too many pages." I can understand, because braille takes a long time to read, especially if you cannot read it well. If it is something that really interests him, though, he will make an effort to read the book in braille. Unfortunately, there are not many braille books for young people. Sometimes we cannot find what we are looking for and it is disappointing. I think that he would rather do something instead of reading. He will not read if he has some music to listen to.

The children should know how to use the Library for the Blind, because if they do not learn how to use the library they will become lost later on in school. We want them to write research papers and book reports and expand their ideas, but it is hard for them. My students who are braille readers cannot use the school library; there are no braille books there. I take the girls who read large print to two libraries: the school library, where there are still large-print books at their grade level, and the Library for the Blind. They are very proud of the fact that they can read print.

I think the talking book program as a whole has been really good for the children. They learn things that I am sure they would never have learned at a regular library because the opportunity would not have been there. I feel very good about the fact that they can go to the braille card catalog at the regional library, look up a book, and find it. They may need a little help, but they can do it, like any other children, and they can be proud of themselves. Yesterday at the library was a pretty good

day. I was very calm. Usually I am yelling, "Don't you know your way around the library yet?" Sometimes I am rude with these children because my expectations are so high for them. I think, "You are like any other kids, you should be able to. . . ." I forget their limitations. The other teachers in the school also forget that the visually handicapped children are in their classes, until the children say, "Mrs. So and So, could you please describe that a little better?" The children usually take the initiative.

I was very apprehensive about mainstreaming at first, but the teachers here have been very receptive. It is the first school that I have come to where the teachers are so receptive. We special education teachers have to meet them halfway, too, but because this is our second year at this school, we are finding our task getting easier. But the teachers know us now, so it is working out. We are trying to mainstream all of the visually handicapped children, especially the younger ones, because they need the social opportunities very much.

FORTY YEARS LATER

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On the basis of the findings of *Braille and Talking Book Reading: A Comparative Study*, which I wrote in 1945, I recommended that talking books for children should include audible illustrations. Books for seeing children are attractive because of the illustrations that the child immediately sees and identifies with. Although we have little of the visual element in our talking books or braille books, we could add sound effects. There are plenty of sound-effects records available. We would not even need to have sound effects throughout the book, but maybe just at the beginning to catch the child's attention—a "title sound picture." For instance, if the story is about railroads, we could begin the talking book with the sound of a train engine, which is available. A story about airplanes could begin with an airplane or airport sound. Make books attractive for the child! We have largely failed in this. The talking books that our children have now are simply stories read onto tape, and not always well read either.

There is a difference between reading to children and reading to adults. In reading to adults the interpretation should not be noticeable, because adults want to do their own interpreting. But people who read to children in libraries, for instance, put an enormous amount of interpretation into their reading and have an enormous amount of interaction with the children. They are storytellers.

In my study I found that, in general, storytelling is better comprehended through talking books than through braille books, while factual material is better comprehended through braille reading than through talking books. Storytelling material is aurally effective because the trend of story is not seriously interrupted when a sentence is skipped, while in factual material every sentence has its importance. In storytelling children listen and absorb. With more factual material children listen and absorb, too, but if they do not absorb the information completely and they want to read a page over again they should be able to. This is difficult with tape and disc recordings. Technically it is possible, but whether children can make intelligent use of the rewind and fast forward functions is another thing. Therefore, in talking books, storytelling material has advantages over more factual material, textbook material.

I do not think that blind children learn differently from the way sighted children do. Whether the organ of comprehension or observation is the eye or the ear does not make an essential difference. If a teacher in a public school class has a blind child in the class and is told that the blind child can read talking books instead of print books, the teacher will accept that. The question is whether the books that the teacher wants the child to read are available in talking books.

If we had a good supply of talking books that were as attractive to blind children as some print books are to sighted children, blind children would benefit greatly. But a book on cassette is not attractive to blind children, and braille has no equivalent for illustrations. The three-dimensional pictures that well-meaning but ignorant people offer to blind children do not take the place of pictures and they are no fun. As I stated earlier, these books should have sound illustrations. And if the teacher or the parents take some time to further explain the story, the child will have even more motivation to read.

Attractive sound-illustrated books could also form a bridge between blind and seeing children because the teacher could play the books to the whole class. The taped books would be attractive to all of them. Some

agency ought to specialize exclusively in the production of talking books for children, considering all the possibilities that there are for improvement. Dramatizations as well as sound illustrations could be added; a female voice and a male voice, for instance, could represent mother and father. And there are other possibilities for drama that we have not used.

A print children's book is often in large print and maybe ten or twelve pages long. It would not fill a cassette. There could be five such books on a cassette tape and they could be nicely spaced with some repetition. Somebody ought to do research on the effectiveness of repeating the same stories on one cassette tape. Children love to hear stories over and over.

We could also put instructions for parents and teachers into some of the books: "While the child is listening to *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* let him have some chocolate to taste." There are recommendations like that in my study, but they were never followed up on. Why? Nobody was really interested. Agencies had their own routines and nobody there really understood children. So the agencies fell into the pattern of repeating for children what they had found to be successful with adults. In fact, they treat children like little adults.

We have not really looked into what attracts blind children to reading. The occasional study finds that sound effects are attractive to blind children and that if the children identify with the story the book gets their attention. If the children do not identify with the story it goes past them. This is probably true for both the visually handicapped child and the seeing child. Seeing children, particularly young ones, also are not attracted if they do not identify with the experience.

Blind children love to listen to television, because it attracts their attention. It is also a social undertaking, participated in with family and friends.

Years ago a person who could not read print was cut off from information. Radio and television have changed this situation. Television is such a potentially rich source of information about current events that the lack of reading ability is less catastrophic than it was in the past. That holds true for everybody. When I started as a teacher for the blind in the 1920s, the first thing we did in assembly every morning was read the newspapers to the blind students. Otherwise the children would not know what was going on in the world. Now, of course, radio and television are competing with talking books for the blind child's attention.

LEARNING-DISABLED CHILDREN AND TALKING BOOKS

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I am a special education instructor at the University of Georgia, where I also work with the Adult Learning Disabilities Clinic. Until recently, when funding was cut off, we also had a program called the Prep School, with which I was very much involved. This was a program for learning-disabled and multiply handicapped children who were not being served by their school districts—special cases to whom the districts felt they were not able to provide individualized attention. The children came to us for two hours a day, sometimes returning to their schools afterward and sometimes having those two hours count as their school day. We would like to have the program again when funds permit. We still provide direct service to college students and adults in the community who need testing and referrals. We refer these adults to talking books if reading is part of their problem.

Last year at Prep School I had one boy who was a tenth-grader, one who was a fifth-grader, and two who were first-graders. The population changed from year to year, but all four of these children were using talking books either for academic work or for recreational reading. These children had no physical handicaps.

With most of our learning-disabled students, talking books are effective, whether used with the corresponding print books or by themselves. As the students get older, they use the tapes without the books, but I encourage the younger children and the parents to listen to the tape and look at the book at the same time; I think that it is good for them to see the words in print.

Many of the older children—unless they have severe reading disabilities and are stuck at the third-grade level—can read, but they read slowly. When their classmates have finished five books, they may still be on chapter ten of a fifteen-chapter book. So these students listen to the story, because they have no comprehension problems. They will never be using print very much. They do not read print for pleasure because reading is such a time-consuming process. The college students

have so many reading assignments that it is really helpful for them to be able to listen and not worry that they will come across a multisyllabic word in print that they will not know how to decode.

My definition of a learning-disabled person is someone with average intelligence who has a problem either in processing information or expressing knowledge in oral or written language. Usually it is a matter of the person's efficiency in processing information. My definition is rather generalized, but the people we serve have average intelligence.

In the college program the learning-disabled students are very well tested. They go through a rigorous twelve-hour testing process that taps both the cognitive and the effective areas. The fact that they are willing to spend that amount of time shows how motivated they are. The younger students have a much smaller amount of testing, usually just a couple of hours—a psychological test and an achievement test to show any discrepancy between achievement and potential.

I worked in elementary, middle, and high schools before coming to the university and the complaint I heard most often about talking books was that the narrators read too slowly. In most cases the children's level of understanding was as high as their grade level, so there was no need to have the stories read at a slow speed. When students did read the talking books for pleasure, we tried to get the talking books credited as book report books. Then during the summer the children would get talking books just to keep in reading practice. We could order books at any grade or comprehension level. Children in the tenth grade who are reading at the third-grade level but who comprehend on the tenth-grade level should not be listening to talking books on the level of third-grade print books.

I think that eventual print reading is more of a goal for younger children than it is for the older ones, so talking books, along with the print books, can be used to pursue that goal in the early grades. Certainly if the students have not made much progress with print by high school, then the purpose of the talking books would be to provide information, to keep giving the children some pleasure reading even though they cannot read print. We had had little success, except in individual cases, in getting children to subscribe to magazines on tape, such as *National Geographic World*, to keep them up to date on world events. Nevertheless, it is wonderful that children who cannot read print have that information available to them if they want it. Especially with

students in middle school on up, I emphasized that although the students could not get the information with their eyes, they could still get it with their ears. Many of them did pick up much of their information both in class and outside of class from what they heard. There were a few children who really had trouble processing language and had trouble with auditory processing as well. They did not like listening to the tapes very much; it was a chore for them to sit and listen.

Listening is one of the skills that we worked on, especially at the younger levels. With all the children, including the younger ones, it was helpful to say, "This is going to be a story about so-and-so, and here are some of the characters. They are going to be involved in this sort of adventure." We set up what was going to happen in the story and then had the children listen to it. And unless they were working on a book report we tried not to ask many questions at the end. It took some of the pleasure away to ask questions at the end of every story they read.

I have been very impressed with how much variety there is in talking books and how well the subjects are covered, except the upper elementary subjects. At that age level there were fewer print books to go along with the tapes. Kindergarten, first-, and second-grade tapes all seemed to have books to go with them. When I had the time, I would get the tapes from the Talking Book Center and then go to the public library or the school library for the print books. But there were times when I honestly did not even try to get a print book, so the children would just listen.

A big step forward, especially for the younger children, came when the Talking Book Center started the summer reading program; finally the learning-disabled children could be a part of that reading club, just like everybody else. I think it is good for their self-concept to get their checkmarks when they have read ten books. But, of course, convincing the parents that talking books was a worthwhile program required much work. Many of the parents think that they must keep pushing their children until they read print. But even if you put print in front of the children ten hours a day, they still may not learn to read it very efficiently. It is hard to get that point across to parents and to convince them that it is okay for their children to read through their ears.

There are two kinds of parents: parents who are avid readers and parents who do not know anything about books or reading except that when you are in school you are supposed to read books, print books.

Parents of the latter type believe that print books are all that counts, and tapes are not books. They are quite adamant about that, and it is difficult to convince them of the benefits of talking books. We probably have less success with children from that kind of home environment.

There comes a time, maybe after the children have been using talking books for a year or two, when they do not use the program as much. I do not know why, but I think part of the reason is that we teachers do not pursue it. We think, "Well, I set the service up. Everything is wonderful." And then we do not follow up.

Also, sometimes the books are less interesting than the descriptions in the catalog lead us to believe. We tried to keep track of which titles the children liked, but that takes a large amount of a teacher's time. I wanted to keep a complete record of the books that the children at the Prep School really liked, by book and reader, if the reader was what made the difference.

Some of the children do not like to listen to the tapes because of the voice quality of the readers. They will listen to an enthusiastic live person reading, but they will not listen to a taped book. But some of the really fine readers do come across, even on the tapes, with a quality that interests children.

One of the problems is that the learning-disabled child or young adult does not fit into a neat category. Within the learning-disabled group there are many variables, especially among the younger children. Some children do have real attention deficits; they cannot sit still for more than five or ten minutes at a time. That is something that we have to warn parents about. We may have the book on tape, but that does not mean that the child is going to sit still for a full thirty minutes and listen to it. The child may have to listen to the book in short segments and, of course, that makes it harder because somebody needs to tie those segments together. In such a case, even though the tapes are a great help, it does take some extra work on an adult's part to make sure that the child is experiencing continuity.

The fifth-grader I worked with last year has almost stopped using talking books now. I think he is one of the true dyslexics I have worked with; he really does not read. We spent two-and-a-half years with him working on recognizing certain things, such as his address and phone number. He simply is not going to learn to read, and by this time he has decided that print is pure drudgery. I talked to his mother not long ago

and she said that he will not sit still anymore. He does not have a real attention deficit; he simply does not have enough interest to sit still. If a book has enough pictures in it to interest him and that book goes along with a tape, he will listen once in a while, but his mother did not feel that he was using the talking book service enough to warrant keeping the equipment. I am not sure he is going to stay in school, but he is really one of the more severe problem cases. This boy is lucky, though, in some respects, because his father is a contractor and the boy loves to do that kind of work. He works with his father quite a bit already, even though he is only thirteen years old. He goes to school now for half a day and spends most of his time in different resource rooms trying to absorb some information. I will be surprised if he stays in school until he is sixteen. If we can get him to that age without completely ruining his self-concept because he cannot read print, then we will have done all right. Children with milder problems are the ones who will keep using the tapes.

I feel that I can affect more people by teaching teachers-to-be than by working as a resource teacher in a school. In almost every course I teach I talk about talking books and how they can be used. I tell my students that, obviously, talking books are not a miracle cure but that they certainly have good potential to help many children.

I set up a tape recorder in the school library with four hookups so that four children could plug in headsets and listen to a tape together. That helped because it contradicted the thinking that "I'm the only one here who can't read." The students felt more at ease listening to the story.

If an adult can spend a little time with the child explaining what is going to happen in the book, sometimes that is enough personal interaction to interest the child in the machines and the tapes. Also, a smaller cassette machine would be a big help, especially for the high school students. By the time learning-disabled students are in college they can tell themselves, "I don't care what people think anymore, I just need to get the information. If I have to listen to tapes on a huge, purple recorder I will." The college students know how valuable the service is and how much time they save by having their material read to them. But some of the high school students are still thinking, "I don't want anybody to know I can't read print. I don't want to be seen carrying around this red tape recorder."

Only recently have we teachers started admitting that we are not "cur-

ing" some children of learning disabilities, that this is not a curable condition, and that we still have adults who have learning disabilities. I think that if we can get the children interested in reading tapes at an earlier age, though, they will continue to use this source of information as adults.

FACTORS INFLUENCING TEACHERS' ENTHUSIASM ABOUT TALKING BOOKS

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Almost two years ago I published the findings of a study I conducted on the morale of teachers of the visually handicapped. In general, teachers in the high-morale group had more experience, higher salaries, lived in a small city, and felt appreciated by administrators, parents, and students. I was motivated to do this study because of my experiences as a teacher of visually handicapped children. Now that I am an administrator I am able to act on some of my findings.

Some of the rural districts where I am the director of special education have no teachers of the visually handicapped. I work in three school districts; five of the towns have populations of about five thousand. On the average, two children in each of those towns are partially sighted and are able to be mainstreamed. The only special services those students get are materials. Students who have more severe handicaps, or lack the capability to function in a normal environment, are placed in the residential school. The students in public school now, with whom I deal daily, are very independent.

Luckily these children have parents who are willing to spend much time with them, helping with homework and acting as resource teachers. But parents also ought to spend time with their children in nonacademic activities. At a meeting yesterday I told a mother that and she just smiled at me. It is not always possible to do everything. She wants so much for her child to succeed in public school that she is willing to use time that normally would be spent on nonacademic activities for homework.

I used to work with blind children in a residential school. Many of my

colleagues and I invested much time and energy in our work, and many times progress would be very slow. The children had many problems and they were not able to verbalize their appreciation for what we were doing for them. Even though I have worked for excellent administrators, in many cases I think they could have done much more in recognizing those of us on the staff who did more than our duties required—did more than punch the clock five days a week. Many teachers gave up time with their families in order to accomplish more on their jobs. This happened regularly, without any real recognition from the administrators. When I resigned, I told my administrator, "Now that I'm resigning, the students, my colleagues, and you are suddenly expressing a lot of appreciation for what I've done. In the five years that I was here I knew that you appreciated it, but you never showed it."

Now that I am an administrator myself, I drop little notes to people or call them on the telephone to say, "I noticed what you did. I appreciate it." Positive reinforcement makes a big difference. I even show appreciation for the paperwork, and during the first two years I did this the reports became noticeably better. When I read through them I try to highlight the recommendations that were made, give the teachers credit for their creativity and judgment, and make sure that I, a principal, or the teachers themselves follow through with the recommendations. Then the teachers are not just spinning wheels but see their ideas benefit a child. This makes their jobs meaningful to them. People are willing to invest time if they know their time is going into something that contributes to society. There have been studies showing that people go into education because they want to improve the quality of life.

Training programs for teachers of the visually handicapped are competing for potential teachers with programs for the mentally retarded and programs for other handicapped groups. Programs for the deaf easily attract students because many people want to learn sign language, but nobody really wants to work with blind people because, as a group, they are not especially dynamic. These training programs have to recruit students, so they sell themselves and make everything look better than it is: "You're going to work with children who will sit and run their fingers over dots. They're going to be musically talented and they'll appreciate what you do for them. The principals in public school buildings and the administrators in the residential schools are really going to support you."

You encounter a certain amount of reality shock when you work with

blind children. For example, it is rather difficult to carry on a conversation with some of the adolescents I work with, some of whom have multiple problems. Training programs only allude to the lack of progress and the feelings of isolation. In most buildings where I work now, there are at least two teachers of the learning disabled and only one teacher of the visually handicapped, if any. When the teacher of the visually handicapped has a problem or a professional question—and no teacher of the visually handicapped is fully knowledgeable—there is no one to talk to right there. Each child presents a different problem. If you have a visually handicapped child who is not learning or not motivated, it is difficult to ask another teacher who does not know about blind children what you should do.

By the time student teachers complete the training program, they are weary of many of the novelties of blindness. However, teachers who have not gone through the training program seem to retain the excitement.

The teacher who appears to be "burning out" is really "rusting out." I realized after my study of the morale of teachers of the visually handicapped that many of their problems were not related to burnout. Simply, people who have been on the job too long find that the challenge is no longer there. Teachers are either tired of the work or tired of not being stimulated. They lose interest in the job and may begin doing things the easy way, not really enriching the curriculum or getting supplemental materials to highlight what they are teaching. I would guess that the teachers who do use library services are the younger, more energetic teachers, although, at the other end of the continuum, teachers who are very experienced, the better teachers, probably use library services, too. I think that there is a curve. The end of five years of teaching is the critical time when people either leave or decide to stay for a long time.

Many of the problems in using library services might stem from the teacher training programs. In my program we talked about library services, we learned where the services were located, and we were given lists of places where we could get books. But it may take a teacher one or two years in the field to find the strings to pull or learn the mechanics of how to get the library services. And the organizations that I used the most as a teacher were the ones that we had visited during my training program. Familiarity may be an important aspect of training that needs investigation. For example, I know that the Seeing Eye Foundation in

New Jersey flies in people from all over the country to learn about guide dogs. Maybe using guide dogs is more critical than using library services, but the organization is getting their dogs used. Perhaps more student teachers should visit regional libraries to see what is there, and more librarians ought to come visit teacher training programs to talk about services and encourage their use. Librarians could also talk to practicing classroom teachers and mobility teachers. Maybe one part of a child's individual education plan (IEP) could be to learn a route from home to the library where special materials are available. And maybe the librarians need to sell the teachers on having the children independently solicit the materials themselves. The children need to be taught where they can get the books. Give them credit during the school day for checking out a book.

I see much competition among the media and new technologies in getting information to these children. For example, competing with libraries is the television, which is really ineffective in making children's minds grow. One of my students recently bought an Optacon, thinking that she would not need talking books if the Optacon worked for her. In a way I am glad that she bought the machine because it will allow her to function more normally. But she is one of the few students I know who can really use an Optacon. She is in the middle school and she is very sensitive about being a blind adolescent. She does not want to have anything to do with adapted materials.

As a teacher I found that blind children would absolutely refuse to use a white cane. They would rather be run over by a car than admit that they were blind. "I don't want to look blind," they would say to me. I would reply, "You look a lot more blind if you don't use a cane."

Similarly, students will do anything to avoid having to use a large-print book. They would rather take a C on a test than use a large-print book and get an A. These children are overly sensitive to people's reactions and I think, because they cannot see, they sometimes exaggerate what other people's reactions will be. If we could let them know that nobody notices while they are using a large-print book or a braille book in class, that might be a start. Maybe the first week in class the blind child is a "blind child." After that, the child is a child who happens to be blind.

When I was teaching mobility, I emphasized very strongly to the children that they should get out and socialize. I would recommend that

they go to a pizza place at night, drink a Coke, eat some pizza, and interact with some sighted children. I wanted them to waste some time and be normal children. The students at the residential school where I taught, and even in the public schools, have such a busy day. It takes them longer to get ready for school so they probably have to get up a little earlier. They have to be transported, in some cases great distances. When they get to school they do not have the luxury of the normal schedule of reading, spelling, math, and social studies because resource room and mobility instruction are also squeezed in. These poor children do not have time to read!

At the residential school we started classes at eight o'clock, had half an hour for lunch, and finished teaching at four-fifteen. It was a very long day. Even kindergarten children really did not have time to catch their breath. After classes they went to structured recreation, and the gym teacher made sure that the recreation director kept these children active, not sitting and listening to talking books. A problem with blind people is that they are too sedentary, so physical education teachers, mobility teachers, and classroom teachers say to these children, "Get up, go out and interact, become more sociable. Learn some interpersonal things through experience."

We are fighting librarians, in a way. When I walked into the School for the Blind on weekends, I would see children sitting there, listening to talking books. They were quiet and their minds were being filled, but sometimes it was a beautiful day outside and other children were playing in the fresh air. These blind children could have been outside, too. Sometimes the talking books become babysitters, filling time in ways that have not always been constructive. Teachers now are trying to get away from the stereotype of blind people sitting and listening to music and talking books.

IV. CHILD DEVELOPMENT COUNSELORS

Counselors who work directly with handicapped children and their families were interviewed to bring the broader picture of life surrounding library service into focus. Points discussed include the larger concerns of the families, the aspects of handicapped children's learning and development that relate directly to how much they read and how they approach the library, information needs of parents and children, and the need for attention to the preschool population of handicapped children. The fact that programs for handicapped children need to be personnel intensive is considered and some imaginative ideas for improvements in the library program are offered.

MAKING BOOKS MEANINGFUL FOR VERY YOUNG BLIND CHILDREN

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I have a caseload of more than fifty legally blind preschool children. My primary pleasure is working with the families of these children and demonstrating to them ways that they can work with their children, believe in their children's abilities, and understand the differences in developmental timetables between blind and sighted children. I also work with preschools to help them adapt to having visually impaired children in their programs. I help them accept the children, understand how the children are interpreting what is going on, and help the children become participants as much as possible. The primary goals of my work are to help the children achieve maximum independence, have good self-concepts, and see real expectations of fulfillment in their lives.

I also work with other counselors, rehabilitation personnel, doctors, nurses, and others to help them better understand the unique needs of this population.

Well-adjusted blind children have the expectation of independence and have positive experiences that prepare them for life. They have learned to trust other people, and their positive self-images make them want to

grow up and become doers. In other words, well-adjusted blind children have good self-concepts so they are open to learning about the world. They are receptive and curious.

Why Books?

What are books to preschoolers? They are experiences shared by the person who is reading the story and the people who are hearing the story and looking at the book. I encourage parents to create stories using tangible objects. For example, they can take a box, add a washcloth, a toothbrush, and a bar of soap, and then sit down and talk about that. This way the parents and their visually handicapped children can share a real experience with tangible things as the parents make up a story. When blind children have experience sharing, they have some solid, concrete information to relate to, and then when they go to bed they use their minds to mull over those tangible word associations and concept associations.

Books can create sharing experiences that are fun, that reach the child's imagination, that play games with words and sounds and lines, but the books have to have more than just symbolic language. To a blind child so much of the world is symbolic language; a blind preschool child who listens to the news hears words that mean nothing to him—he has no associative foundation for thinking about the news. The situation is very different for the adult blind population, in that many adults have become blind after they have established a visual memory.

More than 75 percent of my population of preschoolers have been blind from birth. If they do become blind after birth, in the early years, they have some visual memory but it may not even relate words with what they have experienced visually.

So in working with preschool children, we must remember that they listen to words in a way that is different from the way adults listen. The children need to pick up the rhythms, but they do not have real associative thought processes. So we must think about how the children absorb what they hear. Some books may give them more meaningless, nonassociative words, and nothing more. Studies of children watching television have found that blind children playing in the living room while their parents watch become alert only when the commercials come on. They look up from the toys they have been playing with and listen to commercials, because the commercials give them applicable informa-

tion. News about war or a political campaign means nothing to them, so they turn away from it and go back to their toys.

What benefit, then, does a child get from listening to a story? The benefit is one-on-one contact with the parent. This is important because of another reality of the blind child. While sighted children get "strokes" from their parents all the time, by visual input—the parents look across the room and smile at them or acknowledge that they are going to stick their fingers into a new frosted cake—blind children do not get those continual strokes—the reinforcement of one-on-one contact—that other children do. Yet, blind children do experience one-on-one sharing when the parents read to them. So what can we give the parents that extends the sharing to include information that is applicable for these children?

Blind children have a large amount of "think time." When I was four years old and had to take an hour-and-a-half nap, I would look at the patterns on my ceiling made out of plaster. Or I would watch the clouds go by and my imagination would let me see elephants and cows and witches and all sorts of things. I was playing mind games that were triggered by visual cues. Blind children, when they go to bed, can also play these mind games; they can ruminate over what they have been actively involved in or they can play mind games with information that they have received. We need to provide parents with books that help them understand how to have real communication with their children about experiences and how to work on real listening skills with applicable information plus memory development.

Better Books for Blind Children

I made a book called *Tactile Word Associations,* which has raised words that parents can cut out and stick all over the house so that the blind child has an exposure to word association with objects before starting school. Blind children deserve to get exposure to words that way, casually, in a way not associated with panic or work. It should be done by reaching the child's natural curiosity. And yet I use the words "natural curiosity" with caution, because curiosity is often triggered or stimulated by visual attractions that draw the child outward. Blind children often remain within their own world. They have to be actively drawn out and actively made aware of the fact that they can be curious, that they can explore, and they can find answers in the world by exploring with their hands and by asking questions.

Many blind children listen to tapes that their parents buy, but they do not listen constructively. The tape recorder is a mechanical thing that they can turn on and off, so they may exercise their understanding of cause and effect and they may play funny mind games with these tapes. But purposeful listening is another thing; it takes training. For example, children can be constructively guided in listening to a story that will let them answer some of their own questions about life, such as how to make a peanut butter sandwich.

Rise and Shine is a book that I made on morning listening skills. One of the parents said to me, "I wish there was something to help me focus on listening skills." The book is about ten pages of simple, four-line poems that describe the sounds of the toaster, the sound of orange juice pouring into the glass, the sound of eggs being fried, the sound of Daddy's razor going. Each of these poems describes a significant sound—and sometimes smell—that the children may associate with getting up in the morning. Underneath each poem I added some questions such as, "Where do eggs come from?" So then the child can think about eggs.

This book was triggered by one of my children, who was four years old. I wanted to use the kitchen to teach him some concepts because the kitchen involves many concepts: in, out, empty, full, smells, products, chemistry, an opportunity to develop independence. But many parents of blind children are also wary of the kitchen, because it has things to get into. And yet one of the criteria by which I judge readiness for kindergarten is whether the children can make a peanut butter sandwich, which involves getting the jar off the shelf, opening the jar, getting the bread, opening the bread package, and putting the parts of the sandwich together.

One day a four-year-old I was working with walked into the kitchen carrying a wooden spoon he used to hit things with occasionally. He scraped the top of the stove and scraped the refrigerator and then ran to the sink and tapped the sink. His mother said, "What on earth are you doing?" He said, "Well, don't you know, Mom? I'm cooking." For that blind child, that was all he knew about cooking. Problems like this one can be addressed through books that take the blind child through a logical, sequential progression: "I am going to make a sandwich. I get the bread. I go in the cupboard. I go to the shelf."

Many parents who get tapes from the library are very discouraged.

They complain about the lack of selection and the format, which does not encourage the children to get excited about the book immediately. Also, the taped books often describe pictures that the child is not seeing, but these descriptions do not even necessarily cause a visual memory in adults who may be listening to the story concurrently. The parents suggest that if the story were continuous, without interruptions to describe pictures, the child might be more inclined to sit and listen.

Many of the NLS books are meeting many of the needs of many of the children. But, the experiences could be more enriching. Some creative focusing in this area would be beneficial. And I think the concept of mind games can help us. For example, I once visited a developmental center where the teachers said, "We think this child might have a degenerative problem. Last week, for example, he could put all the squares and all the circles in the pegboard and this week he can't." I looked at them and asked, "Is it that he can't do it? Or that he won't do it?" From that totally blind child's perspective, why should he do it? For the teacher's approval? He has already gone through his mind games with that task, so he must understand a purpose if he is to do the task again. So, too, does there have to be a purpose for a child to look at a book, or to read a book or to have a story read to him. If the benefit to the child is sharing, we should ask if the sharing is of high quality. Is the parent being nourished at the same time, too? Has the parent gained ideas of ways to enrich the experience and extend it?

Purposeful Listening

Children love listening to stories narrated by other children. Blind children get enough lecturing to and enough talking to, and when they hear other children doing things they become curious. They will say, "Mommy, how come so-and-so is opening the jar? How come I don't get to open the jar? How come you always open the jar for me?" Or they start to think about making a sandwich because the little boy in their book made a sandwich and opened a jar. And what about getting dressed? Wonderful stories can be written about getting dressed, and a child who is three years old can listen to them and think, "How come I don't put on my own socks?" Parents also become aware of their children's real potential when the children hear things and act on them. They begin to think, "How can I enrich my child's life?" And stories are the way to do it because children relate to stories.

The most important thing in all this is the sharing component. The parents have to feel comfortable with the activity, but it also has to be fun from the child's perspective. It has to serve the child's purpose. Children love poems and I have written many poems for children. I have a book of poems that are based on shapes: circles, squares, and circles and squares together. The print and the braille say exactly what readers are going to find as they progress through the book, and there are questions so that the children can play some mind games with the illustrations. They can take a piece of string and move it around the circle and the length of the string stays the same. Children think this book is fun. They say, "Oh, there's my poem about circles." And they can pretend they are reading it. They might memorize it and then they might find the word for *circle* because it has been used over and over.

Teaching Blind Children

For quite a while the prevailing philosophy was that we wanted to "normalize" blind children. We said, "These children are the same as any other children. We're going to mainstream them and they are going to fit in and be just like any other children." Blindness had had a very negative connotation, so the pendulum swung toward mainstreaming. Now the pendulum is swinging back a little because we have found that blind people *are* different and different is not necessarily bad. Now we try to address those differences. Sometimes we have to adapt materials, sometimes we have to use more comprehensive basic descriptive terminology. We also must consider another component—repetition. Sighted children repeat things visually. When they watch Mommy button a button, they reinforce visually a skill that they have practiced tangibly and then in their minds. Blind children do not get the incidental learning and visual reinforcement of observing other people.

A blind child's curiosity needs much cultivating if it is to blossom; it needs nourishing. Curiosity feeds curiosity. We must reward curiosity with answers that are comprehensible or significant. To do this we must get into the child's world.

I worked with one little child whose grandmother kept complaining that the girl was not able to put her long pants on by herself. I said to the girl, "Let me see how you try to do it." So the child sat on the floor, put her legs straight up in the air, and pulled the pants on. The pants leg, of course, folded over her foot, and it got stuck. I told her to move

her foot, but she moved it laterally. I had not focused on the finer points of her body; her ankle was what she should have moved. We cannot assume that our terminology is going to be understood. Also, we have to give children instructions in a way that does not insult their intelligence, but makes the task fun.

Parents of blind children have a very serious problem with fatigue. I speak from experience because my son, who is fine now, broke his neck two years ago. Although I have a high energy level, dealing with his injury wore me out. I would pick up articles at work and not know what I was reading. I would miss freeway turnoffs. I would go to the store and stand in front of the bread bin and think to myself, "What am I supposed to do here?" I had already had seventeen years of bonding with this child, so I already believed in him and I had had the reward of parenting. But parents of blind children are devastated by their recognition of vulnerability and by the loss of a dream. And they quickly discover that working with a blind child requires enormous energy.

My son could not move at all after his injury. I might come out of the kitchen to say, "Hey, how would you like some of this?" And he would say, "Mom, I can't move to see what you have. Tell me about it." And I'd say, "A salami sandwich?" Parents of blind children must get down to basic concepts again. They cannot describe salami until the child has a foundation. We have to get the parents to think in terms of the simple needs of their children, when most parents are already thinking ahead to college.

Once at a workshop I was asked what was the most important thing I did in my job. I said, "To encourage bonding or an attachment between blind children and their parents." It has been written that the symbiotic relationship between the primary caretaker and the congenitally blind child is more intense than any other human bond. When this symbiotic relationship has been well established the child can start making great progress, but this bonding is very much at risk with blind children because of all the trauma involved in the situation. At this workshop the audience wanted to know how, in one word, they could tell whether or not the bonding exists. I said, "Enjoyment." When a family is finally enjoying their child, they can handle having people stare at them and deal with the devastation that accompanies blindness—and then all sorts of marvelous things happen. And books, too, can help parents enjoy sharing with the child. But the books have to be those that the children can

get excited about, because their excitement carries over to the parents as well.

I feel a responsibility for this population of children. In addition, I am a nontraditionalist, and I am doing my own experimenting. I feel a very strong moral obligation to make sure that the books these children are getting are really the right books for them. We cannot generalize, either, because no one book can meet the needs of all children. We have to have various books, with various functions. It is important to keep in mind preschool development. These are very precious, formative years, and rushing children into books could cause problems. Development proceeds from concrete to manipulative to abstract. Some books are too abstract. If we rush into abstract concepts, blind children cannot derive the same benefits that sighted children can by using the visual memory that they have already established. So it will help if people first explain the concrete and then build on what children already know.

HELPING THE NONREADER

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I became involved in the problems of nonreaders mainly by getting to know the parents of the children I was seeing. Many of the parents did not use reading as a primary source of entertainment or information themselves. Most of them could read and were able to fill out the rather voluminous questionnaire we gave them, but their responses were usually quite short and certainly not elaborative. Sometimes that was due to their personalities, but most of the time it was simply that the parents were not comfortable with print.

I began to wonder whether reading was as important for some of these children as we were trying to impress them that it was. We were using much time and energy trying to make these children good readers, but despite the reading remediation program, they were not catching on to reading. Their reading was improving slightly with practice, but they were not really breaking the reading code. I suspect that at around age

eight or nine a child's future ability or inability to read in an efficient way is already evident. This applies to both reading as a primary source of information and reading as pleasure. Some children simply are not able to use reading to compete in the academic world. And if those children eventually grow up and become parents of nonreading children who continue the chain, why are we putting so much effort into remedial reading for them?

I did not realize that this was a controversial issue until I happened to talk about it publicly. Then I felt the backlash from teachers. An educator's main goal in life is to teach, and educators cannot accept the fact that there are children who cannot be taught to read. But from the medical or neurological point of view, it makes sense to say, "If so-and-so can't read very well, maybe it's not worth spending an awful lot of time getting him to read. Maybe it's better for him to try to learn another way."

So our clinic started preaching this idea, especially to the older children who were disgusted with reading. We had to change our tune, essentially. Before we had said, "If you try hard and you get the right prescription for your reading problem, you will be a better reader." But when the children tried for a couple of years and saw that they still could not read much better than before, they lost interest and turned their attention to other areas. To change our approach with these children, we had to confront the question of how to educate them without reading. I was able to ferret out some educators who had thought and written about this problem long before I had, but there are no good scientific data that tell people what to do if they do not teach reading. There are only some suggestions.

My experience with tapes has been unpleasant because I have found that learning-disabled children do not know how to use tapes. They are confused by them. Also, they have been told for so long that listening is a second-rate way of getting information that they do not really approach the tapes with the same kind of enthusiasm they take into early reading. Listening is passive learning, and there is something in our ethic that says passive learning is not as good as active learning. If these children are to learn to use tapes successfully, they have to begin early.

The first three years of school are essentially spent trying to decide whether the learning-disabled children are going to be able to learn anything and trying to teach them what they need to know in order to

educate themselves. If they do not learn what they need to know to educate themselves, they do not get educated at the same rate as the rest of the children. That is why I think an alternative to reading has to be started early. I am not sure what the alternative should be because I do not have experience in that area. I am sure something can be done, though, because I know that sometimes something happens to children who loved to sit and listen to stories when they were young. By the time they are teenagers or even fifth- or sixth-graders, many have lost all interest in reading and books.

I have been thinking about the importance of visual imagery in enjoying reading. Many of the children have problems with comprehension, which I feel reflects a general lack of ability to visualize what they are reading. They read the words but have no mental pictures. I have also noticed that some of the commercial talking book tapes use difficult language. Consider *Kidnapped*, for instance, or *Treasure Island*. I was fascinated by these books, but an eleven-year-old with a learning disability whom I know spent no more than about six minutes listening to *Treasure Island*. He began to be distracted after that, even though it was an exciting, action-filled story. I think that, in this case, the language was somewhat out of date, and the boy did not understand it. We should start early exposing children to the richness of different English dialects and different types of usage as part of their preeducational curriculum.

The kindergarten children whom I see generally are eager learners. They love new things and they really enjoy any sort of individual attention. Most of them, unless they have a hyperkinetic problem, sit quietly on the rug while the teacher is reading a story, even though they may have heard the story before. In fact, sometimes they are especially interested in a story they have heard before.

At first the children are extremely eager to learn to read because they know the kind of excitement that a book produces. But as these children grow, the books are no longer fun; the books they are asked to read require enormous work. If the children break the reading code quickly, they keep their enthusiasm to the point at which they can read books that are fun for them. If they do not break the code quickly, if they are stuck on the monosyllabic code, they lose the sense of excitement. Many children do fairly well by memorizing enough words to handle the early reading. But when they are about eight years old things become more

complicated; they are expected to have broken the compound and polysyllabic code and they just cannot do it. From then on reading is hard work and no fun, although they continue to maintain a wish that they could read. Many will beg people to read to them, because they still maintain an interest in stories, but they lose any illusion that they will ever be able to read themselves. At the same time, people quit reading to the children because the parents are trying to get the children to read themselves.

Those children in high school who cannot read beyond the fourth- or fifth-grade level are probably never going to read well. Some of the parents want very much for their children to achieve academically, so they realize that reading is important and they push it. But many parents do not think that it is all that bad for their children to be nonreaders, even though they would prefer that their children could read. They may well say, "Look, I'm an electrician. I can read my manuals. I can pass my driver's test. I don't need all that other stuff. I don't need to read the newspaper." I admit that I used to force my values on those people, but now I believe that wasting children's time trying to teach them to read ad nauseam is criminal.

There are some children who are good in language even though they cannot read. They do not suffer significantly from not being able to read. They know what is going on, because they pick it up by listening. It is the children who have language problems who suffer more academically. Language is not interesting to them; they are nonverbal. Incidentally, psychiatrists find it hard to work with these children because the children do not verbalize their emotions. So I do not even send these children to psychiatrists. The child and the psychiatrist will sit there looking at each other.

The college students with whom I have worked who cannot read are usually highly motivated. They have tried to use tape recorders but found them frustrating because they do not know how to be selective in what they record. Taping lectures is very frustrating for them. They could use an advocate in the classroom to tell them what is important to tape, and to share notes with them. Some resource specialists are trying to teach the children to outline so they will not be burdened with so much talk on the tapes. A dyslexic child I worked with was well motivated and taped everything, but he had so much on tape that he was up all night for two weeks reviewing all the lectures. I could not im-

agine anything more horrible. And of course he got F's and was very discouraged. Nobody ever taught him to tape selectively.

I find some empathy for my approach in the secondary schools and in the middle schools, because by that time teachers have given up in a way. I have been able to sell resource specialists on trying a tape recorder or a typewriter with nonreaders, but they follow this advice with some trepidation because many parents disapprove. I feel sorry for the teachers because they are in a difficult position when the parents want their children to learn to read. There has to be a public education campaign that tells the parents that remediation is not going to make their children readers. Once the parents are convinced of that, we can start selling the importance of really educating their children, not teaching them to be great readers. Then the resource specialists will relax. Part of the resistance to my approach lies in the "back to basics" movement; teachers are afraid to teach anything but basics now.

The best public relations attack would be through the mass media, by getting this issue discussed on the "Phil Donahue Show" or another show that people pay attention to. Once the public is convinced, the professionals will go along with what they want. I believe that if the parents were to suddenly say, "Get my child educated. I don't care if he reads, I just want him to know how our government works," then we would make progress. If people would quit suing the schools for not teaching their children to read and would instead sue the schools for not educating their children, our task would be much easier.

One of my fantasies concerns the awards that are given to high school students. The ones who are good academically get all the awards, but I would like to see the students who can get the information without reading get bigger and better awards. And students who cannot read should not be held less responsible for the information and the education than those who can read. Right now they are given watered-down material and they are not expected to know the same things the readers know. These nonreaders have a complaint; their rights are being infringed upon. And, of course, the whole system works against nonreaders because only readers tend to become teachers.

I tried to get a successful nonreader to go on television coast-to-coast to say that he was successful despite the fact that he could not read, but I had enormous trouble getting any of the nonreaders I know to admit it publicly. I know some doctors who are extremely poor readers, but none

of them would admit it publicly. I finally found a nonreader who heads the design department in a medium-size Chicago company; this man's daughter could not read either, so he agreed to do it simply because he thought doing it might help her. Generally nonreaders do not want anybody to know that they cannot read. Would you want to know that your doctor cannot read? It is estimated that 20 percent of high school graduates are illiterate. So where are they? They are keeping their mouths shut because they are scared.

TEACHING CHILDREN WHO HAVE LOW VISION: A NEW APPROACH

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In 1979 I conducted a study with Dr. Michael Moran, a professor of school psychology at Duquesne University, to obtain a comprehensive profile of the low-vision child's learning characteristics. At the time of our study the state standards in Pennsylvania recommended a curriculum of braille, mobility, large type, and listening skills for children with low vision. But we observed that these children had problems similar to the problems of learning-disabled children, and therefore we felt that they had other significant learning needs. In order to survive in a public school, these low-vision children needed specific remediation in academic subjects to facilitate their integration. In my travels around the state and to various conventions, I discovered that people from other schools with programs for the visually handicapped also believed that their children needed much more diagnostic teaching. In brief, if you give a child large print, that child will not necessarily read it. Why stress listening skills when 90 percent of the children have some vision and should be developing visual skills in concert with listening skills?

But those of us who believed that curricula should be changed had to find some research to justify our point of view. We could not find any national studies or even any comprehensive research studies that had actually examined the learning characteristics of visually handicapped children. We found one study in which the American Foundation for the

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Blind had asked teachers to rate the competencies needed for teachers of the visually handicapped, but most of the teachers in their sample had come from schools that stressed the traditional curricula. We wanted instead to examine the children themselves to verify whether they had a specific learning problem. We also wanted to find out if visually handicapped children have a particular, identifiable learning style.

We found that visually handicapped children are very heterogeneous with respect to other handicaps, visual acuity, visual skills, and intelligence. Specifically, we found that 60 percent of our sample of visually handicapped children showed functional evidence of structural brain damage. Children with 20/200 vision showed very little activity in certain parts of their brains. We did not expect such dramatic findings.

The same month that we finished our study the Nobel Prize was awarded to two researchers who showed that if animals have no other trauma to the brain, such as problems with nutrition, but are simply deprived of light, certain areas of the brain do not develop. The fact that the visually handicapped children in our study had brains that were different from those of other children could therefore be a developmental problem, caused simply by a lack of stimulation for the children. We concluded that a visual impairment could contribute to neurological differences, with the result that visually handicapped children process information differently and learn differently; they have a different cognitive makeup. This does not mean that they cannot learn, but that they learn at a much slower rate than regular children do. We did not say that these blind children are brain damaged; our study suggests that in certain ways these blind children are very similar to learning-disabled children, who also, presumably, have some neurological differences in how they process information.

In Pittsburgh I have worked with gifted children who are visually handicapped and with low-vision children who are in the normal IQ range. These children benefit a great deal from books on tape. In fact, once we get the children into high school we encourage them to use books on tape almost exclusively because that is what they will get when they go to college. But 50 percent of the children have the same problem with taped materials that they have with printed materials. Because of some difficulty in processing information, they have difficulty comprehending the material, regardless of whether the book is in print or on tape. In most instances resource or itinerant teachers have to review the

material – whether it is reading, math, science, or social studies – with these children. It has to be retaught along simpler lines so that the children can function in the mainstream. In a sense we "rewrite" books for children so that they can understand them. The teacher reads part of the book, picks out a key phrase, questions the child, and has the child read; then they will go over the material together again. If this cognitive problem is solved, the students can use tapes independently when they reach high school; otherwise, they require a resource room teacher to tutor them in all subjects throughout high school. Many of our high school students have received this tutoring. They spend as many as three periods a day being tutored in the resource room.

I believe that learning depends less on materials than on the type of direct instruction. Most of our students cannot learn without direct instruction. They cannot pick up a book and read it on their own and get the information.

I was charged with developing the first comprehensive special education curriculum for the entire city of Pittsburgh, kindergarten through twelfth grade. We designed a generic curriculum that can be used with any mildly handicapped child. This means that it can be used with any child having the type of cognitive problem we found in our study – whether the child is blind, visually handicapped, mildly hearing impaired, mildly retarded, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed.

Our most difficult problem (I wrote at least nine hundred letters to different companies) was finding materials on a high-interest, noninsulting level for children, especially in science and social studies. I found one company in this country that sells books written specifically for the mildly handicapped and I bought all I could from it in science and social studies. Their American history book is very sophisticated and sixteen-year-olds are not insulted by it, but the lessons are only two or three pages long and the comprehension questions are very much to the point, very simple. We need more books like that, materials that use an adult format but are written on a second- to fourth-grade reading level and designed in such a way that the lessons are compact and have a specific set of activities at the end in which everyone can participate. This company does not offer a world cultures book, so I had to buy a standard, elementary-level textbook on the subject, which is now sitting on the shelves in all my schools. All my teachers in middle school are teaching American history instead and ignoring world culture. The teachers claim

that none of the children are interested in the world cultures book, but all of them love the American history book. These children are going to be mainstreamed at some point and they are not supposed to study American history throughout the three years of middle school, but that is the only book I could get to match the curriculum.

I am not aware of any other school district in the country that is taking our "generic" approach. Most of the material from the Council for Exceptional Children, the Division for the Visually Handicapped, says that we should fight against generic training. I am not saying that teachers of the visually handicapped should simply be generically trained and not have the special skills. Mobility and braille are very important, but teachers of the visually handicapped should probably have the same core of courses and experiences that teachers of the learning disabled have in their preservice training.

Unfortunately, the funds for our preschool program have been cut. We still have our classes and services for children from age three upward, but the teacher who used to work with infants and toddlers has left and we could not replace her because of the funding cuts. We have generic special education classes. Children come to school for a half-day, every day, and are taught basic developmental skills. They have Individual Education Programs (IEPs). The preschool program includes storytelling, drawing pictures, and introducing children's literature. We have a special preschool class for the hearing impaired, because they are learning total communication skills already. But the other preschool classes combine the visually handicapped, blind, retarded, and disturbed children. We try to match members of the groups developmentally, but basically children with all different kinds of handicaps are together. We see large developmental gains in these children. This is a very strong program. All of our programs are housed in elementary schools so at least in the hallways the children have the feeling of being mainstreamed.

I would say that 99 percent of our visually handicapped children are not totally blind. Only two of our students are totally blind. Forty percent of the visually handicapped children we serve are mildly to severely handicapped, meaning that they have been identified as learning disabled, retarded, or emotionally disturbed. The other 60 percent are not officially diagnosed as being in one of those categories, but, as our study showed, on the average they are behind in reading and math skills,

although we have seen some significant gains as a result of the kind of program we provide here.

The visually handicapped children we studied are about two years behind in reading skills. This is significant not in terms of reading decoding but in terms of reading comprehension and math computation. But we also have among those students five who are gifted, so this is a very heterogeneous group. The typical low-vision child, however, has an average IQ and is an underachiever in school. It is only through the tutoring we provide that these children can be maintained in mainstreamed programs in our public schools. I imagine that many of our children served by itinerant teachers would be in classrooms for the visually impaired rather than in mainstreamed classrooms if they were not getting the academic tutoring.

Our greatest need for the adolescent population is high-interest, noninsulting materials at very low reading levels for recreational reading. We try to keep these students at grade level as much as possible, but we are not going to get a child to sit down for recreational reading on a fifth-grade level if the child is functioning on level three. And teenagers in middle school do not want to read a book at level three with balloons and clowns; they want to see racing cars in their books. Science and social studies could be very interesting recreational reading, also, if books in these subjects were available at a lower reading level. I am not saying that we should be giving these children lower-level books and have lower expectations of them, but the reality is, if they are going to develop more slowly than normal children, we cannot ignore the fact that they need some materials they can use and be happy with. There is no sense giving them books that trigger frustration, because then they start to dislike school, they become behavior problems, and their mothers call me up and start to cry.

Mainstreaming is a double-edged sword. It puts a child with handicaps in school with "normal" children, but also makes the handicapped child realize, "If I don't get a lot of help I'm going to be a failure." Occasionally children do fail, and then their parents want a more restrictive program. I hesitate to put children in such programs except in serious cases, because most of our children do not live their lives in self-contained classrooms.

SERVING VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

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The San Francisco Lighthouse for the Blind serves children from age four to age twenty-one and has no trouble finding clients. Most of them are referred from the school system, that is, from teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility specialists, or from agencies such as the American Foundation for the Blind. We work primarily with partially sighted children, the majority of whom are multiimpaired. This does not mean that these children are physically handicapped and blind. The nomenclature is very vague in this area of education. These children generally have more than one handicap, but that handicap may be an emotional problem, a neurosis, a hearing problem, a central nervous system problem, or a handicap that is not as yet defined, in which case we take the child to various doctors to try to define it. We are the last chance here for people who have gone to other agencies without satisfaction.

Information Needs

Information for parents of visually handicapped children is hard to come by. I do not think it is because the services offered to parents and the visually handicapped are no good; rather, the problem lies with the lines of communication that get information to the parents. And if the parents do get the information, it may be too old, or it may not make good sense—it may be written by a doctor as if he were talking to another doctor—or it may be pedantic, or the research may be outdated, or the writing may not be colloquial enough, or the content may not be interesting enough. The more interesting materials for parents are the books that have the appropriate information and are also well packaged. People are attracted to and learn from something that has been well packaged.

Materials that speak directly to the very strong needs of visually handicapped adolescents are especially scarce. For example, the books that

have to do with dating, forming relationships, cooking, and sex are too old and uninteresting or they have been translated directly from the books and read onto tape with no concern about how the information might actually be used by the adolescents. There are some people, though, who know how to take material written for the fully sighted and translate it so that it can be used, while also making it interesting for the child.

More information is also needed for younger children about their disabilities. Some marvelous new books have been published, but I have seen none of them in NLS listings.

Materials and Format

As a long-time teacher in the field, I have found that the audio material for youngsters is best handled when there is an accompanying book, whether it is braille, large print, or primary print with a library binding. (Children who are two or three years behind in fine motor control need a library binding.) Twin Vision books are wonderful for the totally blind, and if there is a tape recording to go along with the Twin Vision book the parents have an option. Mommy can read the Twin Vision book to her blind child and when she goes away the child can hear the book over and over again by listening to the tape. It is wonderful to have cassettes with the Twin Vision books. Giving youngsters information that is multimodal increases their chances of integrating sensory information.

It is not wise to depend exclusively on audio material with blind children who are probably nonauditory, who really must learn best by experience. They need "hands-on" learning. They want to hold the book. The pictures, the colors, and the geometric symbolism that are in a print book assist little children who are partially sighted. This is important because so many visually impaired youngsters are not "tuned in." This tuning in is not automatic, it is taught. It is important for teachers to have materials with interesting content, but having the materials in as many sensory forms as possible accelerates the potential for real learning and accelerates the possibility that the teachers will not be duplicating someone else's efforts.

Teachers and NLS

When I was teaching, the parents that I knew had always learned

about the NLS program from a teacher, which leads to another problem. The information that is available to teachers about the NLS service is poor. Some teachers of visually handicapped children never use NLS materials. They have the equipment and they might even have some of the books that come out, but not every teacher is creative in dealing with the service. The library can look at models of service delivery systems to improve this situation. When a library has its annual open house it should contact the special education community, going beyond the visually handicapped programs into learning disabled and deaf programs. A special media event open to everyone, but specifically designed to introduce people to talking books at the library, would be useful. This should be a hands-on event, with people there who can put on a demonstration of new materials. Such annual in-service training for special educators, updating the teachers about what is available and getting feedback on new books and new equipment, is a way that libraries can provide information and also monitor the service.

The Children

Many handicapped children are physically or emotionally abused, or both. In some families with handicapped children, school is the only relief from abuse the children have. And when the children come home from school, the only relief they have is listening to the television, the radio, or talking books. A strong audio component is very important in the lives of those children, and that is a part of the talking book program. We need to look at what it takes to interest a child. The more variety of media you have the more the child will be interested and the more self-instructing the materials can be.

Many blind children, both boys and girls, love mechanical things. If simple equipment could be made as a precursor to more difficult equipment—personal computers, cassette braille, Optacons, typewriters—it would be marvelous. Blind children could learn how to use the equipment themselves. I taught my students what all those buttons mean on those orange cassette machines, but they were always frustrated that the machines would not record. Older children need a more advanced machine that would have the record function on it, because this would make it possible to take NLS materials a step further. Materials could provide the themes for stories that the children could make up themselves, on tapes. Blind children could learn how to write their own

stories, record them, and listen to themselves on the tape. Or one side of the cassette could have a story and the other side could be used by the children to record their versions of the same story. This would take the learning of the story a step further and teach the children to use the materials.

Some visually handicapped children are more skilled with mechanical things than their parents and they have more time to explore them. Maybe Mother has a new baby, one who is not visually handicapped. She may be spending her time with the baby while Dad is at work. The blind child has plenty of time.

Now I am rather ignorant about training packages, but if there was a package that would introduce a parent to the service in an interesting way, not just a cassette in a man's voice saying, "And then you do this. . .," but something such as, "Hi, we want to welcome you to the talking book program. You may have this or this or this. If you have this then skip to the next. . . ." Some people do not get the turntable but they get the cassette player, so the introduction could explain how the cassette player is used and then give examples on how to best use it.

Also, totally blind children may wake up very early because their time clocks are often off. Four- and five-year-olds do not have strong auditory processing, but when they wake up, instead of looking at a book, they can get their headphones out, plug them in, and listen to a tape. They take whatever it is that they have to go along with the tape, such as a kinesthetic game, and they listen to a story. That is really a powerful kind of learning. Parents should be told, on the introductory tape or in person, "You don't have to be there to monitor the use of this machine all the time. Show your child how to use the headphone and while you are sleeping the child can get a book and listen to it very quietly, just as regular kids do. You put out toys for children so when they get up early they have something to play with."

I would like to see NLS training materials for parents that would be very simply done and would give them some alternatives for using the materials. Parents should not plug their blind children in at seven o'clock every night instead of reading stories to them. It is useful to be teaching handicapped children how to be more independent with the equipment and this requires as much hands-on experience as possible. Some parents have a phobia about mechanics. It becomes too much trouble for them to take the turntable out, or they do not quite understand the arm move-

ment, or they need to know again what the borrowing scheme is and when things are due back. Also, the NLS catalogs are very confusing and the ordering system is too hard; it is difficult to go back and forth between the order forms and the book listings, and nowhere does it say how many books can be ordered. No one, it seems, has considered catalog making very much. Maybe a simple coupon system could be used. Each child could have ten coupons to send in, each coupon representing a new title. The whole process could be made simpler and more exciting.

There never seem to be enough good stories for little children, the five-, six-, and seven-year-old beginning readers. Beginning readers frequently need music, sound effects, or Doctor Seuss-type rhymes in the beginning to grab their attention because their auditory skills never match their visual and touch skills. Five-year-olds have attention spans only for certain things, for dramatic storytelling for instance, because vision is the system that matures first. Librarians should have some training in the development of sensory systems and the methods that reading specialists have known for years about how to involve children in reading. How many talking book recordings are dramatized for young children? Services for children often come last, and they ought to have first priority.

There are parents, too, who are themselves television bound because when they come home at night they are tired. The mission of NLS in influencing reading could be to help families focus on themselves and on the wonderful world of reading. Reading can stimulate a family's experience in an important way. We do not know what is replacing the nuclear family, but there is still a connection in words. If NLS is looking at the mechanical aspects and content of its program, it should also examine what influence it has on the world of the handicapped.

More Ideas for NLS

Another area to examine is monitoring. When I was a teacher no one ever asked me for feedback. Librarians were interested only in getting people signed up. They were interested in the content of the books and would sell the stories, but they did not look at how the books would be used. I suggest that a monitoring system is in order. Librarians should ask people after a certain amount of time, "Do you find this service helpful? If you do, what really works for you?"

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I would like to see somebody make containers to hold the cassette books, big cardboard desk holders with slots. Many of those green cassette books end up on the floor, stacked up near the heater. A desk holder, not necessarily provided free of charge, would be a good alternative. It could be made from thick cardboard and hold perhaps five or six books at once. It might help people decide how many books to order at one time. If the desk holder held six books, it would give people the idea that six books at a time is plenty.

Children laugh at the NLS program now. Probably one in ten really uses it and that is the child who has a natural bent for organizing and taking charge of the materials provided. Having containers to put taped books in would give children the chance to learn to organize their own materials. Such a step would have the effect of saying, "Not only do you get these interesting books, but we're going to show you how to organize them. Later on there will be *Time* and *Newsweek* on tape; there will be a cookbook on tape. We are going to help you put it all together."

Two months ago I had a marvelous tour of NASA in Washington. At the end of the tour I asked, "Do you have any materials? Do you have anything in braille?" Did I get an earful! I went down to the education office, where they had miniatures of all the airplanes in their museum and a core teaching curriculum. I was absolutely amazed at what had been put together. It did not consist only of books and brochures for teachers, counselors, and educators of fully sighted children. There were materials for handicapped children and for those of us who work with them. And everything was done in a way that said, "We understand that not everyone learns in the same way." NASA does not have to do all this. NASA does not have to have an education office. But NASA is looking at future scientists, future mathematicians, and future teachers and NASA is proselytizing for the space industry. What is NLS proselytizing for?

The Parents

When I was an itinerant teacher I worked with a family who lived in a lower-middle-class part of town. There were three visually impaired children in the extended family. In school, I was investigating the children and their needs, so I explored talking books with them. They were courteous, but apparently they had not had the service before and it

did not occur to them that it would be very interesting. When they wanted to read something they would attempt to read the regular print, out of a desire to be like everybody else. When I had known them for a couple of months and I was able to talk to the father (who was visually handicapped also) in the home, I introduced the notion that there were many helpful things available to them but did not push. When I mentioned getting talking books, I did not sense any real enthusiasm, although I signed them up for service and sat down with them to go over the various procedures.

Two things sold the father on the idea of listening to books. The mother wanted a cookbook she could listen to, and the father wanted to learn something about guns and rifles. So getting the service for the children meant interesting the parents; I was able to do this because I did not push and I was able to get the parents interested in reading. I also admitted to the older children that I thought the adolescent materials were rather bad and had nothing to do with their home life. When they found out that they could also get Christian recordings, another family member became interested. So their interest was dependent on their personal experiences, but they did not sit down and identify their needs the way some people do.

Many of this family's friends had expensive equipment such as record players and video equipment, but they were in debt because of it. My clients were conscientious people who did not want to get into debt. They found it hard to believe that the government was providing the talking books program for free; in fact they viewed the program as charity for quite a while.

The books I got for them, especially the adolescent books, were funny because they were so old. For the fifteen-year-old girl I ordered a book on growing up and social skills, and when we listened to it together, we started laughing because it was so out of date. I was able to interest the children anyway, with some of the better materials, but it was only through the adults that I was able to bring the program into the home in the first place. So I applaud NLS for having the catalogs of adult and children's books together, because involving the parents is actually a very good way to get the children involved.

A Child's Other Needs

Children, normally, will get excited about something, drop it for a

couple of weeks or months, and then come back to it. That is part of the learning process. But congenitally blind children especially depend on—and love—audio stuff. Some of these children just inhale these books, even terrible ones. But imagine what is happening to these children subconsciously when they read terrible stuff. What are they learning?

Well-adjusted children have mastered some basic survival skills and have their basic needs taken care of for them. They have a place to sleep, so they feel safe. They know how to give and receive affection. Well-adjusted children have, for their developmental level, ways of coping. When they are confronted with the unknown, they are able to respond at their developmental level.

But in the case of visually handicapped children, sometimes they do not feel safe because they trip over things in the house and they have no way of consistently knowing where the dangers are. Or perhaps their families are overprotective to the extent of not giving the children enough experience, so that when they get in unfamiliar situations, the children feel extremely insecure. Some families always live hand to mouth, so the children's basic need of being fed is not being met. Nurturing can also be a problem; some parents are so busy simply adjusting to the idea that they have an impaired, imperfect child that they do not handle the nurturing very well.

If children are extremely hungry, for food or for attention, that is what is in the forefront of their minds. Also, visually handicapped children can be denied certain things that other children are not. For example, a visually handicapped boy's mother could say that he cannot go to the skating party with his sister, because he might fall down. So he thinks about what is wrong with him. That concerns him more than reading does.

V. READING SPECIALISTS

With the advent of mainstreaming and in recognition of the fact that many reading-disabled children are in public school classrooms, any study of the library use of the print-handicapped population of children needs to include a look at reading instruction as it occurs both in the regular classroom and in remedial situations. Reading instruction, of course, largely determines how our present and future library patrons view reading and books.

Reading specialists inside and outside universities were asked to talk about (1) their techniques for getting children excited about reading, (2) the current state of the art of teaching reading, and (3) the kind of family environments that encourage children to become readers. They were also asked to make suggestions for modifying library services to the blind and physically handicapped to further encourage reading in this juvenile population. A few of the reading specialists had become directly involved in work with the handicapped, or in teaching reading through the use of recorded books, and their special experiences were explored.

TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING BLIND CHILDREN TO READ

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In one of my classes I had a totally blind student named Mary, whose student-teaching I supervised. A few months before class started she came to see me because she needed to know the names of the textbooks ahead of time to have them recorded. I began thinking then about what kinds of practicum experience I wanted to plan for her. I knew that the public school classroom was not the right place for Mary because she needed to have a successful experience teaching someone to read. So I thought the best place would be the school for the visually impaired here in Baton Rouge. I made arrangements for Mary to student-teach in a second-grade classroom there. One of the second-graders was a little girl with very low vision, a beginning braille student, and Mary was assigned to work with her. At that point Mary came to me and said, "I

don't know anything about teaching braille. I know how to read braille, but I don't know how to teach it." I said to her, "I don't know anything about teaching braille, but I sure know about teaching children to read. So let's apply everything that I know about reading to this situation." It worked very well. People tell me now that my approach to teaching braille is new and I keep thinking, "It can't possibly be."

In the past ten years people have realized that the knowledge children have about print itself and about the process of reading is extremely important in their learning to read. In other words, learning to read is not simply a mechanical process; the child has to have some knowledge of what words are and some strategies for reading in order to learn how to read. The words and strategies are called "concepts about print." Most children learn concepts about print in an easy, casual way as they grow up because they are surrounded by print. Every day they see it and people talk about it. They pick up the concepts that print is meaningful, that it conveys information, and that there are such things as words. Yet a child who heard speech and did not see the corresponding print could not very well separate words because they come in a stream. It is even harder to separate single sounds, but children must learn to do this in order to learn to read.

Blind children are not surrounded by print. Chances are they have sighted parents and if their parents read to them they read to them from print rather than from braille. From birth blind children do not feel braille in the same way that sighted children see print. They miss out on those initial experiences of gaining concepts about braille. So I suggest that teachers help blind children develop those concepts. If they label artwork in print, they should also label it in braille. If they have the children's names on their desks, the children's names should be in braille as well as print. Everyday language experiences should also be associated with braille.

Children learn to read braille in a very traditional way. It is a totally mechanized, memorized way of learning: "Here is this letter; now memorize it. Feel this word; it says 'mother.' The problem is that blind children taught in this manner tend to miss the meaning in reading. They think, "Sure, I can memorize this stuff." And they do memorize it, but it takes them several years to learn why they are learning to read and why it is necessary. I suspect that many blind children who learn to read in braille never go as far as sighted children do with reading. Blind chil-

dren may never get as interested in reading and may never read for pleasure because reading is not the meaningful activity for them that it is for other children.

I am conducting a study now in schools for the visually impaired, trying to assess the children's concepts about braille. I took a braille book to one of the schools this week. I made it myself by gluing spoons, pennies, buttons, and zippers in it and brailling the text below those objects. As a reading specialist I believe that a book like this should be used to teach all children how to read. Inside the book are pictures of objects (such as spoons and pennies) or the objects themselves; then the print or the braille discusses the pictures or things and sets up an interaction. The visually handicapped children to whom I have shown my book say that they have never encountered a book like it. It is no wonder that they do not really understand what it is they are doing when they learn to read. Children are marvelous. They can learn anything we teach them, but when we teach them to read outside any meaningful context, they are not learning what we think they are learning.

Another type of book that could be used with braille readers is a "pattern" book or a "predictable" book, which repeats phrases over and over again. The book *Good Luck, Bad Luck* is a pattern book. Alternating pages illustrate first good luck, then bad luck. If this book were in braille very young blind children could begin to feel the braille and begin to recognize the words "good luck, bad luck," which are repeated so often. They could begin to read, too, even though they are not really reading the braille. The story clues also let the children know which is coming up, "good luck" or "bad luck." Pattern books in braille should be available, especially for the very young blind child.

In certain ways teaching braille reading is different from teaching print reading. For example, braille has about two hundred signs that are particularly hard to teach and are usually taught in a sequence. I know that there is a new program called *Patterns* to teach young children braille reading. Among other things, *Patterns* is a gradual introduction to the signs. I do not know any more about the program, but I suspect that it is similar to the basal reading materials, only in braille. The basal readers are good, but they do not relate to the sensory experiences of young blind children; nor are they tactile. They are not real, live reading materials.

People who write children's books take many concepts for granted.

For example, the phrase "the bird was singing in the tree" will not mean much to a blind child unless someone has actually brought a bird into the hands of the child. In writing books for young children who have never had any sight, we must think about what in the environment these children would actually experience, such as eating cereal or feeling the grass. We must think about real, tactile experiences rather than visual experiences. It is hard for us to think that way.

To teach blind children to read I would bring in a box full of buttons and let the children feel all the different kinds, all the different textures. Then we would talk about all of the places that buttons could be found. Then I would bring in a book about buttons. Every page of this book would be full of buttons and things that buttons could be on, and the book would use those words that the children had used orally to describe the box full of buttons. Maybe the next day I would bring in ice cream and every child could have a different flavor of ice cream. They would all taste the different flavors and then they would read about ice cream. They would actually have experiences at school and then read about what they had experienced.

All you have to do to teach children to read when they are sighted is to introduce print to them at a certain age, when they are using language naturally and talking about their experiences. They will learn to read. There is a mystique about teaching children to read when they get to school. We have a readiness program and the children learn a few words, then they get the preprimer. Most children learn to read that way only because nobody put print in front of them earlier. Many children could learn to read long before starting school if print were introduced to them. So I believe we need to introduce blind children to literature. A book full of buttons certainly is literature. And once they have read that book, they could read the book about Corduroy, who loses his buttons, and it will be meaningful to them.

All the blind children that I have worked with have had normal or above-normal intelligence. There are blind children who have a much slower learning pace, but the little children that I have been working with are bright and just like normal children. They are going to learn through a different mode, that is all.

The children have not said anything to me about talking books. All they have said is that they like the book of objects I made. I have an unopened piece of chewing gum glued down to a page and do they like

that page! They think of elaborate schemes to get me out of the room so that they can get the chewing gum. I cannot comment on talking books, but I do recommend that books like mine be produced nationally.

Teaching reading to blind children seems to be a wide open field for research. Many people in the business of teaching reading agree with me that reading is an act of communication and it ought to be taught as that. I look forward to applying the idea to further research into teaching blind children to read.

THE CLASSROOM TEACHER AND CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Getting Teachers Interested

Lines of communication need to be opened between librarians and teachers, and librarians need to do some marketing. Librarians should be more aggressive in telling teachers what they can do for them and what facilities they have. There is not much communication between teachers, and there is even less communication between teachers and librarians, who are in another realm. Let the librarians come into the schools to tell stories and do whatever else might create a positive atmosphere for reading.

I am behind in reading about children's books right now, and I am behind in my research. When I get home after a day at the university I do not want to read *Reading Research Quarterly*, so I can sympathize with teachers who are feeling overwhelmed. Very few teachers consistently read children's book reviews, because most teachers are too busy with the day-to-day demands of their jobs. Maybe librarians have the same problem, but at least they are in an environment where books are coming into their hands. The classroom teacher does not have that proximity with books. Studies of reading behavior in the home have shown that a key factor in determining whether people are going to read is the proximity of books. The same factor influences teachers' promo-

tion of children's literature in the classroom—the books are not there to remind them.

The reading teacher's journals periodically publish articles on books about handicapped children or books that teach number and other concepts, but most teachers do not read those articles. Even sending information through the mail does not work very effectively. Teachers need some kind of individual information delivery system. Librarians must begin to collar teachers and say, "Look at this book!" One of the professors at this university works with the local library council here. Each year the council sponsors an author symposium to which children's book authors and teachers are invited. The symposium is always well attended; it is an opportunity for teachers to become aware of the authors and the new books. This annual event motivates the teachers; they return to their children in the classroom with autographed books and share them.

Reading in the Classroom

There is a dichotomy of thought in the reading field. First, there is a group of teachers who are interested in books and attend events such as the authors' symposium. They have a holistic view of the language process. Second, there are teachers—straight "reading" people—who think, "I have to teach this kid these reading skills before he can read." These teachers separate the reading process into skills: comprehension skills, vocabulary skills, word attack skills. The children they deal with are usually remedial readers. Once the children get into the environment of the reading lab, reading specialists typically use workbooks with them. Sometimes they use cassette tapes, but there are workbooks to go along with the tapes. Very seldom do these children read books or have free time to read on their own. If they do have free time to read a real book and a real story without comprehension questions or word attack drills, it is very short—at most five minutes out of the day.

We are trying to encourage teachers to be confident that when they give a child a children's book to read or when they read to the children, it is not just fun and playtime. It *is* a very enjoyable activity, but it also teaches the children some very important language skills. Teachers have to realize that reading is language and that it is not simply a set of skills that can be taught in a hierarchy. Reading is an integrated process that requires a natural setting. And the setting for reading is reading a book or listening while it is read to you, or reading and listening together.

Language has to be in context, there has to be meaning to it. Sitting around doing workbooks or sounding out letters and identifying letters to go with pictures is not reading. Even having children sit in circles and take turns reading sentences is not reading. It is not even language; it is an abstraction of language. Our approach is to convince teachers that the reading program should be a program in which children read.

Everyone in the field of reading pays some lip service to the use of children's books in the classroom, but those of us who are now training teachers should emphasize, "Children's literature is important. Here are the books you can use, and here is how you can use them. Let us give top priority to books instead of workbooks." That is what I say to my class. But a good 60 to 70 percent of my colleagues do not even take the extra step to discuss children's literature because many of them are not familiar with recent children's books.

Most teacher trainers also think in terms of specialization. There are special children's literature classes to teach prospective teachers about books. In a reading class teachers learn how to teach reading; they study diphthongs, digraphs, and main ideas. And the same thing happens in the schools. During reading time the children learn to read and during story time the teacher reads a story to the class for fun.

Some teachers allow children to work during storytime—which tells the children that reading is not very important. I asked one child, "What do you do when the teacher reads a story to you?" He said, "I write sentences." I said "Oh? What kind of sentences?" He said, "Sentences like, 'I will not talk in class.' So in this child's mind, reading aloud was being associated with writing punishment sentences. What kind of message are teachers giving when they allow this? They are not saying, "Reading is really important. It is valuable." They are saying, "You can kind of pay attention. You can draw pictures if you want to." And usually the children will draw pictures.

Blind children probably get more attention than other handicapped children because their handicap is so obvious that they have to get materials. My guess is that blind children have more book activities, are read to more often, and have fewer workbook exercises than other children. I cannot imagine that workbooks could be transcribed into braille, though there are large-print workbooks.

Remedial Reading Approaches

I am more confident in talking about what happens with learning-disabled children who are put into either resource rooms or reading labs. What happens to them is the same thing that happens to the typical remedial reader. In special education, especially in the field of learning disabilities, educators have decided that the best way to teach reading is to start with the smallest part of reading, on the assumption that the smaller the easier, and then they build from there. Consequently, children who are having trouble intellectually processing information to begin with are asked to deal with abstract concepts such as the sound of a letter. My classic example is the Auditory In-Depth Discrimination Program, which takes blocks, triangles, and circles and ascribes sounds to them. The child repeats the sounds according to the symbols and somehow that is supposed to be related to reading. The child eventually progresses into sounding out letters and sounding out words. Teachers of the learning disabled usually use the behaviorist approach. They think that we need to train children with learning disabilities by repetition and practice, using materials such as word lists and vocabulary flash cards. The great majority of special educators hold this view, although there are isolated teachers who believe that reading means books.

Positive attitudes about books and reading, therefore, depend more and more on the children's having books available at home as well as parents who value books and take the time to read to them. Parents should make the experience as positive as possible because it lays the foundation for future reading. The whole reading environment that the parents initiate, without pushing it, is a naturally positive experience that teachers need to continue.

In the schools in New Zealand, teachers use huge books that facilitate the process of reading aloud because with groups of children, everyone can see the pictures. Along with reading the books and sharing them with the children, the teachers try to make the books meaningful and useful. The teachers stress the enjoyment of the reading experience but they also ask the children questions such as, "What did you get out of this?" or "How does this make you better?" They initiate open-ended discussions with the children.

When we questioned teachers in this country we found that most of them read aloud to their children in the early grades, but in the upper grades they read aloud less. I read to my students in high school and I

have had student teachers read to their students in high school. The student might say, "Ugh!" at first, but then they enjoy it. I do not think there are many people, even at the adult level, who do not enjoy being read to. I read to students in my college classes. They look forward to it so much that they are annoyed when I do not save enough time for it.

So reading aloud in the classroom needs to be encouraged. Maybe librarians could hold workshops to discuss current children's books, plus techniques for reading aloud, storytelling, and creative drama. I think teachers need to be encouraged to do more creative things to follow up on oral reading. Reading for reading's sake is very important, but it is also very effective to add the variety of a followup activity. Most of the teachers follow up oral reading by having the children draw pictures. Why not do a drama based on the story or have the children change the story into a play that they can put on? That way the teacher incorporates writing as well as reading.

Writing, actually, is probably a greater problem than reading—the children do not write because all they do is fill in workbook pages. So creative writing is a very important aspect of reading, too. Reading, writing, listening, and speaking should all occur together. The goal of reading aloud to children should first of all be enjoyment. Other aspects of the experience should include hearing the language patterns, getting a sense of story, listening to story patterns, and learning about different genres of literature. Added to all this should be some writing activity and some speaking activity.

I have been describing the approach of regular teachers, but what approach do the special education teachers, who are so skills focused, take?

Education is much maligned today, but the situation is not all the teachers' fault. There are problems with teachers, but they are just part of the larger problem. What are the parents doing at home to help the teachers? What can the librarians do? What can the communities do? Industry is having a problem and industry representatives are saying, "We're sick of people coming in here who can't read or do math, who can't do the inventory." So industry is waking up and saying, "Maybe if we support our school systems. . . ."

But the school systems today do not have the resources they need. We are on the brink of having to make some major decisions and commitments concerning education and I do not think the government and

the financial decision makers are proceeding very intelligently. Much money is being poured into technology right now; we want math and science teachers. Unfortunately, although I am in favor of computers, I am also frightened by the emphasis on technology. It is yet another example that when something new comes along, we are inundated. We are told it will automatically solve all of our problems. We have recognized, or are paying lip service to, the fact that we have to train teachers in technology. Teachers are getting microcomputers in their classrooms, but they do not even know how to plug them in or what to do with them, and they do not have the software they need. Again it is a matter of the money. Are we going to get the money to support this wonderful new tool? Microcomputers also are a new dimension that is being added to the home. Are they going to replace television or are they going to add to it? Will computer time replace the time that parents used to spend reading to their children?

I have attended enough presentations to see some positive things about computers. For example, Atari funded a project to put microcomputers in the barrios in San Antonio, with the really poor people, to see what kind of interaction the equipment would cause between the parents and the children. The company trained the parents and provided them with educational programs. The outcome was similar to mothers' reading to their children. They gathered the children on their laps with the microcomputer in front of them and talked about what happened on the screen. Computer technology may help children come to school better prepared for reading, if the parents buy the equipment and if the schools can provide the necessary software. Then the microcomputer can be a wonderfully compatible tool that will not replace anything, but add an excellent dimension to education.

There are many social and cultural changes to blame for our problems in education. What is happening with the family? What are the implications? I am in favor of women working. I like to see women in the workplace and I know that they can go home to their children and spend quality time with them. But do they do it? What have our nation's recent economic problems done to the relationship between parents and children? If the parents are depressed and feel that there is no hope, what does that say to the children? If the parents have poor self-concepts, if they are worried about the job or whether they are going to be able to make the next house payment, then it is a terrible time for the family.

What vehicle do we have to transmit good values to children? Consider the media that the children are exposed to. They may watch "Sesame Street" if they are lucky, and perhaps some of the children's theater programs. More than likely they are opting to watch the Saturday cartoons and "Dukes of Hazzard." On most of the media programs during prime time what values are transmitted? Where are the values that are going to open the children's eyes to hobbies or to experiences that they have to experience vicariously? Books, not microcomputers, can help transmit important information, values, and vicarious experiences to children. And if the parents and teachers are not willing to devote time to books and to discussions revolving around books, we end up with children who are burned out at age twelve, looking for outlets such as drugs or dropping out. They see no options for themselves. They have a very limited life view.

When I taught high school, I had remedial readers, children who could not think beyond next week. I asked them what they would be doing ten years from now, and they could not respond rationally to my question. The typical response would be, "Yeah, man. I'm going to be a pimp and I'm going to have me an Eldorado." It might be true. The best answer I got was, "I'll be an auto mechanic." That child was realistic. But then another child, who could barely read, thought that in ten years he would be a doctor. The children did not associate where they were then with where they might be in the future, and in their behavior there was a lack of understanding of cause and effect. Such children do not even realize that when they punch someone, that person is going to fight back.

I attended a presentation that prompted my question about the future. The speaker talked about exposing readers to books about famous remedial readers, such as Albert Einstein, and working on teachers' awareness that some famous people had had problems when they were students. Biographies of people like that contain important information for children and can help their self-concepts. A child may think, "I'm a poor reader and I'm always going to be a failure, so screw it all." But through books the child can learn otherwise.

Children need to know how to take risks and face up to the consequences. They need to have problem-solving skills, and they need to be able to deal with the future and understand that there are different op-

tions they can plan for. This learning can start with very young children by asking them, "If you do this, what will be the consequences?" or "What if Dorothy had not put on those red shoes. . .?" Children can start looking at values, too, via characters in books. Are blind and disabled children getting that? I do not know. It takes a very strong person to work on this with them. I hope special education people are trained or have an innate quality so they are able to confront handicapped children realistically and say, "Where do you see yourself now and what can you learn from this experience about where you are going?" There are good books about handicapped people that present a realistic and successful picture of the future.

COOPERATION BETWEEN LIBRARIANS AND TEACHERS

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I have gone into many classrooms in different school districts to watch teachers teaching children how to read. When I looked around the rooms I would not see any signs of reading occurring. The children were spending much time learning how to read, but there were no book jackets or book posters or children's stories on the walls of the classrooms. I would invariably start asking questions about pleasure reading and would hear things such as, "Well, we are so busy with the basics that we don't have time to read," or "Gee, that has to happen in the home." I also talked to school librarians, who would tell me, "Every two weeks the teachers bring their students to the library, but the children don't check out books for in-class reading the way they used to."

When I spoke to groups of teachers I would mention new children's books and I would see blank looks on faces in the audience. Teachers would ask, "How do you spell that author's name?" Of course, a teacher is not expected to know every children's book that is written, but I could sense that teachers were not keeping track of new books. At meetings I began to informally ask teachers to write down the five most recent children's books that they had read and they could not do it.

My experiences in the classroom and in other meetings with teachers

prompted me to undertake a formal study of teachers' promotion of recreational reading. I suspected when I began the study that the incidence of such reading is down, and I have long been convinced that it does not do much good to give students the skill to read if they do not also have the will to read. One of the things that we teachers talk about is getting the right book into the hands of the right child at the right time. It seemed to me that if a teacher does not know about these new books, then it is pretty hard for that teacher to put the right book into the right hands.

Basically the study found three things. First, 91 percent of the 571 teachers studied could not name three children's books written in the past five years. Of this total, 71 percent could not list even a single book! It is stunning! Second, few teachers could name children's books written in the past seven years in specific categories. Only 2 percent of the teachers studied could name a biography; only 9 percent could name a science fiction book, despite all the recent publicity about *E.T.* and *Star Wars*. And despite all the children's fiction books that are written, only 21 percent could name a children's fiction book written in the past seven years. The third finding was that 89 percent of the teachers could not name three or more activities that promote recreational reading on the part of children. Incidentally, I suspect that if I had interviewed remedial reading teachers, the statistics would not be any better. When they get children into remedial reading rooms they work on skills the whole time.

The reaction to the study results was overwhelmingly positive—conservatively two hundred letters and phone calls. Now when I talk to groups of teachers I usually begin by giving them the test I used in the study, but instead of having them give me their answers I say, "Okay, suppose you didn't do very well on this test? What are you going to do about it?" Then we start talking about some constructive ideas.

The first constructive action I recommend is that we teachers rethink what we are doing about library books. New books are coming out at such an overwhelming rate that the average teacher cannot keep up with them. And there are so many things clamoring for a teacher's attention; new books for children do not clamor loud enough. So I suggest that on teacher in-service training days the librarian spend some time with teachers actually discussing with them and letting them look at some of the newer books the library has acquired. I also recommend that a librarian, preferably in concert with a couple of teachers, form a com-

mittee and periodically write brief annotated bibliographies of new titles for the teachers. That will help expand the teachers' knowledge of books. Then, I suggest to teachers that they examine some elementary reading textbooks that have strategies for helping children to have pleasurable experiences with books, and that they use some of those strategies to enhance their students' recreational reading.

But somebody has to talk to the librarians, too. For example, my daughter, who is in kindergarten, knows how to read. In a sense, it is a nuisance for a child to learn how to read before she is supposed to. Luckily for her, we take her to the public library and we have books in the home, because she was allowed to go to her school library for the first time last week, at the end of the school year. I think that school librarians should reevaluate their roles. Many librarians are slipping back into being keepers of books rather than people who are trying to get those books into the hands of children. School administrators are backing off on many things and they feel uncomfortable questioning librarians, so the leadership for changing librarians will have to come from the library profession itself.

When I talked to a state librarians' group six years ago, I said that they have some very nice libraries, but the downtown library and the school library were islands unto themselves. I think there were many people in the room who felt uncomfortable with what I said because an "outsider" was asking some tough questions of the librarians, just as I ask tough questions of the reading teachers. Someone has to ask these questions.

I am concerned about young children in our country right now. There is a saying, "If you want people to grow up to love Homer, you have to teach them first to love Mother Goose." And I am really concerned about the number of children in our country who are not being taught to love Mother Goose. I am very concerned about the number of children in our country who are not getting exposed to books and for whom reading is not a natural part of life. And this problem is not confined to ghettos; I am talking about children everywhere. Video games and television are stiff competition for reading. And unless librarians expose children to the best that we have in books, the child who grows up reading history and science textbooks is not going to want to read anything that is not required reading. We have to begin making that child see that reading can be truly a joyous experience.

In the area of teacher training we have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. Teachers today are under pressure about so many things. Whoever makes the most noise is the person teachers listen to. Someone could tell teachers tomorrow, "You should stand on your heads and spit nickels," and they will stand on their heads and spit nickels. That is the way it is. Unfortunately, many assessment measures assess how well a child learns to read, rather than whether the child enjoys reading. I think that teachers are going to put good children's books into the hands of their students only when someone tells them what those books are. That is why I have been trying to urge this partnership between the librarians and the teachers.

If I were a member of the American Library Association I would try to figure out a way to smuggle books into the classroom. I know that is a shocking way of putting it, but that is really what I mean. If we ask teachers to take classes in children's literature they are not going to do it. But if librarians took books into the classrooms they would be welcomed.

I wrote an article a few years ago on reading and the mainstreamed child in which I recommended that some form of bibliotherapy be incorporated into the curriculum for mainstreamed children. In addition to increasing children's interest in reading it may also be used as a strategy for overcoming an individual's personal problems. Since many mainstreamed children may be experiencing some adjustment problems, the classroom teachers should consider the possibility of incorporating a program of bibliotherapy with a saturated book program.

I think many teachers are afraid of having a handicapped child who has been mainstreamed in their classroom. They are almost expecting a freak. With that in mind, I think that literature could probably serve yet another purpose. If teachers were to read some of the new books that depict the lives of handicapped people, the knowledge gained would break down some of their resistance, end some of their anxieties. And if handicapped children read such books themselves they would be aware that they are not so strange and that there are other children with similar handicaps. These books can also be good for the entire classroom. We might not want to acknowledge this, but children can be cruel to each other. Able-bodied children can have more of an understanding of their mainstreamed peers if they are exposed to the right literature. But, in

present practice, I think it is very rare that a teacher does anything with children's literature to accommodate handicapped children.

Two summers ago I took my son, Jeff, to the library often, at the same time every week. There was a handicapped child there who wore heavy leg braces. Jeff and that little boy were together every week for five weeks, spending time talking, and Jeff never once mentioned anything about the leg braces. After about the fifth week Jeff said to me, "Can he swim?" And I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "If he went in the water with those braces on, would he sink? We go swimming and I was going to invite him, but I wouldn't want to see him drown." We talked about this a little bit and I was glad that he had asked me, not blurted out his question to the child. Young children wonder about these things. I think that teachers can go a long way toward making other children realize that the handicapped child who is mainstreamed in their classroom is first of all a child and only secondarily a handicapped person.

A NEW TECHNIQUE FOR RECORDING BOOKS FOR CHILDREN WITH READING DISABILITIES

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The recordings for blind children are awful. I found the NLS tapes to be very dull. They are not recorded in a way that makes children want to listen to them. Highly intelligent blind children have to be able to retain a tremendous amount of information. They have to be able to associate what they are hearing with what they are feeling. There have been children, such as Helen Keller, who could absorb much material because they had both the intelligence and the other perceptions. But blind children would have to be very strong auditorally in order to work with NLS materials because they are not very interesting.

I have perfected a technique of recording books for children that is much more effective. First, the recordings must be natural and enthusiastic. Then there are three basic variables: (1) the phrase length, (2) the amount of material recorded on one tape, and (3) the speed at which

the person records. I can take material on a fifth-grade reading level and record it for a child reading on a second-grade level, third-grade level, or fourth-grade level, depending on how I alter those three variables.

I record the material in such a way that a child can read it back from the print, after two or three times listening to the tape, very smoothly and with excellent comprehension. Suppose the tape of a certain textbook runs thirty minutes and the textbook is written on the sixth-grade level, but the child reads on a third-grade level. For that child, listening to that textbook is like listening to a foreign language; the people are talking too quickly and for too long a time. It becomes a listening exercise for the child, who does not really look at the printed page, does not really focus on the words because they are all flowing by too fast. The child will lose all interest.

For the past five years I have been working on an instrument called the Reading Style Inventory. When the child takes the inventory, the teacher receives a printout that recommends specifically whether this taped books method should be used for the child. For children who are really dyslexic, with very severe visual perception problems, there is a better first method. This method has the children write their own stories and then, because dyslexic children tend to reverse their b's and d's and mix up letters within a word, the children trace over the words they have written. It is like working with the blind, in a sense, only the problem is obviously much more subtle than not being able to see at all. This method corrects the child's improper visualization of the word. But for children who have auditory problems, who are not dyslexic but have either memory or discrimination problems with the sounds, the recorded books are wonderful, even though the children absorb them auditorally. The recordings that I found very successful for those groups are the ones that are only one or two minutes long. The children listen to the short tapes two or three times and then they read aloud immediately afterward. They do not work on the tapes very long at a time.

Most children's auditory memory improves with my taped books, even though I am not directly teaching lessons. The children start focusing and tuning in because the amount that they have to listen to and comprehend is manageable. As long as the taped pieces are small enough, children who can only do one piece in one sitting are not discouraged. If the children can handle more, they can do one side, then read to some-

one and do the next side. But if the tape is very long there is no flexibility.

I am working with a school in Harlem where we have what New York calls "double holdovers," children who have been retained in grade twice. We have children who are fifteen years old and reading at a second- to fourth-grade level. It is very hard to stimulate their interest in anything at school. Their speech patterns are very poor and they leave off all their word endings. We have recorded high-interest books for them, and some classics, starting on the second-grade reading level and moving up to the seventh. We also recorded some American short stories such as "The Monkey's Paw," "Bluebeard," and "The Rocking-horse Winner," plus excerpts from some children's classics, for instance the whitewashing scene from *Tom Sawyer*. We are trying to expose these children to fine literature. Another strength of this taped books method is that we can work with children who are reading on a third- or fourth-grade level, especially if their language comprehension is better than that, and bring them all the way up to the correct reading level for their grade. When children listen to a recording three times and then read it back from the print, they read better than they ever have in their lives. The teachers see amazing results instantly.

In my first year of teaching I taught learning-disabled children in a resource room. I had six or seven children who were nonreaders in second grade. When I tested the children at the beginning of the year, I found that many of them had auditory perception problems, in terms of memory and discrimination. So I started working with the standard materials because a consultant to the program advised me to. In four months the children did not learn anything. Their reading remained the same.

One little girl had severe memory problems; she had never read a word in her life and she was repeating the second grade. I devised a technique to make a tape recording with her every morning, starting with four words from her preprimer. I had her look at the words and we talked about each word as she traced over it with her finger. I did everything I could to try to get her to remember the words. She listened to this seven- or eight-minute recording as many times as she wanted—which was often because she was fascinated with her own voice—and when she came back in the afternoon she knew the four words. She said them quickly, and she could spell them correctly when she wrote on the

blackboard. As she began to learn more and more words this way, I started to record stories for her. Then I began recording individual tapes for many of the children in the resource room. I was not recording material that was very difficult for the children; for the most part it was just a little above their grade level. Then some of the older children wanted books on their language comprehension level.

One boy who had been identified as dyslexic—everyone said he would never read—asked me to record *Charlotte's Web*, which had been read to him before. He was reading on a shaky first-grade level. I did not think he would be able to read the material, but I thought it would be a good listening exercise for him. I recorded only about half a page from the part of *Charlotte's Web* that he remembered vividly and particularly enjoyed. I did not record the passage so slowly that it would be boring, but I read slowly enough so that he could keep up with it. The recording itself was only a minute long and he listened to it four times. I acted as if I was not paying attention to what he was doing. He read the passage to himself and then he came over and he read it perfectly to me from a print book. He imitated my pacing, he used excellent expression, and he imitated the voices that I used for Wilbur and Charlotte. It was a perfect reading. This was so unexpected I almost cried; I had to walk away from him.

Another little girl who benefited from the tapes was behaviorally disordered. She was soiling her pants and fighting with the other children. She did not get along with anyone. She was reading on a beginning first-grade level and absolutely insisted that she wanted to read the simplified version of Greek myths on tape. She learned in a very strange way—learning often is unpredictable, especially for children with emotional problems. She stayed with these few recorded pages for two months and mastered them very slowly. She listened to and then read the first paragraph several times the first day. She worked on the first paragraph again the next day, then she worked on the next paragraph and put them together. After two months, she said to her teacher, "Now I want to do part two of Heracles." The teacher thought, "Oh, I'm going to die!" But since the child was attentive and her behavior was improving, the teacher let her keep going. She finished the second half in three days! At that point the girl was able to read anything in the classroom up to a fourth-grade reading level. It was a total breakthrough for her. In two-and-a-half months she went from a

low first-grade reading level up to a fourth-grade reading level. Not only could she read everything at that level, but she tested at the fourth-grade level on standardized tests. So there was transference from the taped material that she learned on that very high level to other areas of learning. Obviously her mind was capable of taking that material and applying the concepts and the patterns to other things that she was reading.

At that time I had many of the other children working from basal readers. I have found that if material is really interesting and well written, the chances that the child will retain it are increased tremendously. The basal readers in general are less effective than taped books because they are not well written, and they are not interesting for children. So over the next summer I recorded some complete books and I put those in the resource room. Then during the school year I recorded about twenty books in small portions, some books taking four tapes, some eight, some ten. The children still wanted books that were six months to a year above their grade level. They did extremely well with them, and they read them back and made good progress. The next summer, since I liked what was happening so much and the children's interest was so high, I recorded portions of 120 books. I put the tapes in order of difficulty and set up a highly structured system because most poor readers need much structure. I started with preprimers and went all the way up to sixth-grade level books, all in small segments. Then, since I could not match every child perfectly, I started designing supplementary materials: games, tactual-kinesthetic materials, to reinforce the vocabulary.

In the middle of this I started taking courses with an expert on learning styles who gave me a theoretical base for much of what I was doing. We find that many children who have difficulty in our schools today are right-brain, intuitive, holistic learners, who learn to read words and sentences more quickly and easily than they learn the sound of isolated letters. They have a great deal of trouble with analytic materials and with fragmented materials. Even though the basal reader does not ask children to isolate letters, the workbook does. So the workbook does not correlate with the material in the basal reader, and right-brain learners cannot handle that constant shift of gears and fragmentation. It does not help them to learn. The high-interest taped books are more successful with children of this type.

I have also found that the quality of the writing is very important. I now try to help audiences of teachers understand what good writing is,

telling them that what the publishers say the stories do and what they really do may be two different things. Teachers give children no choice in their reading materials and often the writing is not very good. And in the lower grades, of course, there is such a phonic-linguistic (analytic) emphasis that the readers have practically no story at all. Only highly analytic children can handle that kind of material. "Global" learners need anecdotes and real stories, they need to know why, and they need to be emotionally involved in what they are learning; otherwise they tune the process out. In addition, many young children do not have well-developed auditory memories to enable them to absorb what is being taught. Of all the perceptual senses the auditory seems to be the last to develop, after the tactual-kinesthetic and visual senses.

In the past, most people learned to read with the whole word method, with very little emphasis on phonics. Obviously a portion of the population learned to read very well. And most of the teachers who are now teaching decoding skills did not learn decoding skills until they were graduate students. So they learned to be good readers, comprehending very well, without those skills. But others who were taught with the whole word method do have some trouble decoding today. They were highly auditory, analytic children who did not have the phonics that they needed. Not everybody needs phonics. Global learners tend to be able to take the whole words and, as the brain is processing them in a very random fashion, to see the patterns. They may not be able to verbalize the patterns or do a workbook page on them, but on a very intuitive level they see patterns.

It is the same way early readers learn to read. Children who come to school at age five and can read a couple of years above grade level have generally not watched "Sesame Street," and not been taught phonics. Generally the parents have read extensively to these children, and they have learned in this very subtle, informal way. With such very relaxed learning there is no anxiety. That is basically what the taped books begin to do again—lower a child's anxiety level, allow the child to recall the words and sense patterns.

When young children learn language they will often say, "I rided to school," for example. Those children have understood that "ed" is the past tense. Even though they cannot verbalize the rule, they have extracted it from all the speech they have heard. In a sense that is similar to what the children are doing when they listen to the tapes. When

children get sufficient input that they can handle, their minds start making connections.

If librarians start offering recorded children's books, they will find that many children will learn to read with the tapes. That is worth doing. Librarians can take ten excellent books on different grade levels, record them, test them a bit in the library, and then say to the reading teachers, "Why don't you try this? This is a technique I read about and this is why it works." Librarians should start developing taped books because librarians know reading material better than most reading teachers. And in my opinion a knowledge of books is the most important knowledge to have. If you are going to get children who hate reading to really enjoy it, you have to know what the good books are and how to present them.

Reading teachers are usually fascinated by the idea of taped books. Occasionally in an audience of a hundred, one person who is adamant about the importance of phonics will walk out of my presentation. So I try to ease the audience into the subject. I begin by talking to the group about the theory that people learn in different ways; then I discuss the research that shows that poor readers are those who are mismatched in the schools. They are, for instance, the children who prefer dim light, not the schools' bright lighting. I talk about how that preference affects a child's ability to learn. And then I begin to talk about the learning styles of young children and what the implications are for instruction.

It is not until much later that I explore how members of the audience were taught to read and find out how many of them learned decoding and phonics skills when they were adults. I say to them, "You can't apply the same rules for learning to read to everyone because people learn differently." I start winning people over. Most of them understand that I am not saying, "No phonics for anyone." I explain to them that the taped books method is powerful because (1) it is natural for children to want to read good literature and (2) this method reaches children who have more global and holistic ways of learning. The youngsters who are failing in the schools tend to be of this type – they do not achieve because the schools emphasize phonics.

It is becoming very clear what the learning style of young children is and what the learning style of poor readers is. What these children need in order to learn to read is tactual, kinesthetic involvement and mobility. Lengthening the school year or lengthening the school day will not be the answers for them. Teachers hold some children back by stressing

phonics instruction and not making time for books, for literature. Most teachers will say that they never get to books. So librarians, who have a vast knowledge of what is good writing, what are good books, can play a vital role in helping teachers teach these children how to read.

PROMOTING LEISURE READING

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In most regular classrooms today a child does not have the opportunity for leisure or practice reading. In a classroom recently I asked some children, "What is the difference between reading at school and reading for fun?" They said, "If you read for fun you can quit when you want to. You don't have to read in the same place. You don't have to sit where somebody tells you to. You don't have to answer somebody's dumb questions." Why shouldn't children be able to read like that? But that kind of reading does not go on at school. And outside of school, children do not read much, primarily because of television and other outside interests. Many factors contribute to this situation, but children are not interested in sitting down for an extended period of time and becoming involved in a book.

Researchers have surveyed teachers and found that they get their news not from the newspaper but from radio and television. Thus, the lack of reading is not a problem only for the children we are teaching, but something that is cultural. As a society we are doing less reading than we have done in the past and we have more alternatives for activity.

I heard the publisher of *People* magazine talk about the enormous growth his magazine has experienced. He pointed out that no article in *People* is longer than two thousand words and there are many pictures in the magazine. *People* appeals to the consumers who are the first generation of television adults; they do not want an extended passage to read. They want to get through the magazine quickly and they want many pictures. The book condensations that *People* sometimes has are on the order of high-interest, low-vocabulary books for children: lots of pictures, big print, abbreviated text.

My colleagues and I have done research, asking middle-school children about the books that they enjoyed and who had suggested those books to them to read. The children told us that they chose books primarily on the recommendations of family members and friends. They told us, particularly by the high school level, that the school library is not the place to go for pleasure reading; there are so many rules for using the library that it is not an inviting place for children. I think that is a most damning statement.

Children have told us that librarians sometimes recommend books to them, but not nearly so often as I would have anticipated. And out of all five hundred children that we talked to across the country, we did not find one who had ever had a principal recommend a book to him. Teachers make assignments, children say, but they do not make specific suggestions such as, "You ought to read this book; it is one that I enjoyed," or "I thought about you when I read this book." In every talk I give, I stress the fact that a teacher cannot recommend a book to a child if the teacher does not know the book exists. Teachers should be taught that pleasure reading is a vital part of what goes on in the classroom, not a frill or an extra. The children are not being read to at home, so if the teachers do not read to the children, they are not read to at all. Reading to children, sharing books and recommending books to children individually is crucially important right now.

Children need to see that a wide range of people are readers. Children often do not associate reading with the people they value. Reading specialists have also been trying to get teachers to build libraries of tapes with different people reading on them in different dialects: old people and young people, people from other regions of the country with different dialects, or people from other countries. Such tapes of stories for use in the classroom could make reading a happy experience. A number of schools here and around the country have senior citizens who volunteer in the school library at the elementary level. They do absolutely no teaching, but pair up with children and let the children read to them. They simply listen to the children and encourage them in a reciprocally beneficial experience. These children need a chance to read aloud; they need to have somebody take an interest in them, and they need to share with other people what they are interested in reading about.

At the heart of this problem, as in so many other things, is the person who is the formal leader, the administrator of whatever level of educa-

tion or public facility is in question. If that person endorses reading and the efforts to increase reading, then many other things fall into place. A couple of weeks ago I visited a principal in South Carolina who has a very simple system. Each week either he or one of the students recommends a book and the school library provides multiple copies of it so that everyone who wants to can read that book. Then on Fridays, the people who wish to participate in a book talk pick up lunches in the lunchroom and meet in the library with the principal. Isn't that a simple thing? The principal is telling these children that he values their opinions of the books and that he thinks reading is important.

When I talk about this to teachers, everybody nods and says, "Yeah, that's right." And then they go back to their classrooms and do whatever they were doing before. There are many pressures on the classroom teacher today. The achievement test and the child's scores on it are stressed, and recreational reading gets pushed to the side. The teacher says, "How can I keep up with the thousands of trade books coming out every year when I can't even get these portfolios marked every other day with the test results in them?" When there are many things competing for the teachers' time, the teachers are going to do those things that the principal thinks are important. Certainly they are not engaged in a concerted effort to cause problems or to shirk duties. Teachers give lip service to the importance of reading, but they do not put this into practice.

In the classroom today a teacher would have to be a maverick to encourage reading to the extent I recommend. If at the end of the year those children who have been read to so much do not score at a certain level on the standardized test, the teacher gets a poor evaluation.

Reading encouragement will not show results in one quarter or even in one year, in some instances. Reading encouragement takes a long-term commitment, and teachers are hard pressed to take that risk and send their children on unprepared, by their standards or by school standards, in the hope that reading is going to pay off in the long run. A teacher has to be brave to risk looking bad in the interim.

Recreational reading is also important because it is our practice vehicle and if we do not read regularly, if does not occur to us to read when we do have time. If students at the elementary level do not read, they do not develop the skills they need to be able to read later in life. Children's reading levels are found to have dropped each fall when the children have not chosen to read during the summer.

I think it takes a long-term, informal, and comfortable relationship between librarians and teachers to encourage an exchange of information about children's books and to encourage pleasure reading for children.

VI. LIBRARIANS

I selected the librarians to be interviewed for this report on the bases of NLS and network recommendations and geographical considerations; each geographical conference and at least one subregional library were represented in the study. In one instance, a paraprofessional proved to be the staff member who worked most closely with children, and thus was the principal person interviewed. In another instance, when the geographical conference had several good programs, we decided to interview the librarian newest to the job on the chance that this would produce more immediate reactions and insights, which proved to be the case.

We asked the librarians to describe how they find eligible readers and if they have any suspicions that they are not reaching certain readers. We asked them about their methods of providing service and about improvements in programs or materials that might benefit the provision of service. We asked them to mention any other problems or suggestions they had for improving the children's program.

These librarians were also responsible for finding the children, parents, and *some of* the teachers that were interviewed.

Lydia Ranger
Sue Sugimura
Lorna Lau
Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Honolulu, Hawaii

Ms. Ranger: We received an LSCA grant to buy audio-visual materials. Another area of the state library system had a library for the parents of exceptional children, which included audio-visual materials, and this collection was eventually transferred to our library. But before this collection came to us, we had to look at catalogs to select audio-visual materials. Also, we received recommendations on materials that were previewed by the children's audio-visual committee at the local schools. Now we have a large audio-visual collection for children in addition to our NLS materials.

Ms. Sugimura: Some children, even if they are eligible for NLS materials, prefer to borrow from our audio-visual collection. They do

not borrow the NLS books, even though the books are here for them. Maybe it is because the audio-visual kits often have a filmstrip or something to actually touch or do, so the children are able to interact more with the kits than with a tape or record.

Ms. Ranger: The book-and-record combinations that NLS used to produce would be acceptable to the learning disabled.

Ms. Lau: We have purchased some of those sets of cassette tapes and print books.

Ms. Sugimura: Children tend to borrow NLS books individually, whereas they get our audio-visual material through teachers who visit the library. Thus, the audio-visual material may be reaching more students than the NLS material.

Ms. Lau: Some of the children have high interest in reading but a limited reading vocabulary, so we need more high-interest, low-vocabulary books in braille and on tape. And in certain subject areas, too, we need more books for children. One child asked about books on rockets and submarines, but we did not have anything in the children's section and the adult books were too difficult for him.

Ms. Sugimura: There should be more materials for preschoolers. A father came in one Saturday and wanted material for his three-year-old son, but there are very few books for preschool children. I had a hard time finding something appropriate. If we are going to expose children to literature we should start with young children, but kindergarten-level materials are too difficult for very young children.

Ms. Lau: Even books labeled "K through 3" have a four-year range in vocabulary. When we see that label and read the description of the book, we think that young readers can handle it, but there is too great a vocabulary range. We really do need more preschool books.

Ms. Ranger: NLS started out with the adult program only. For many years we did not serve blind children. The adults outnumber the children and I think that is why NLS has never really considered the needs of the children's program. The children's program amounts to the traditional recording of books, but I do not know what else it should be.

None of our children, including the learning disabled, use the public library. Perhaps they would if public librarians would invite them to story hours. At one public library the children's librarian used to present story hours for the deaf children, and now they have a person who signs along with story hours. Community libraries could invite handicapped

children to visit, to come to story hours and programs. But getting the word out to the handicapped children is difficult. I have considered finding out exactly where these children are living and what libraries they are close to, and then notifying their local libraries about them.

Ms. Sugimura: We have not done much to find more eligible readers, but we know where they should be and if we decided to conduct an outreach program we would know where to go. We have to do more to publicize our services. We have to let people know what we are doing. Many teachers do not know that we exist. For several years we sent an annual announcement to the school district office to distribute to all the schools; we have no way of knowing how many announcements filtered down to the teachers. This announcement informed them that they had to reregister for talking books at the beginning of each school year. We found that registration stayed the same after we stopped sending the announcements out last year.

Ms. Ranger: We were invited to submit an article for the newsletter of the State Office of Education, and that is a way we can publicize our services to teachers. Going to the meetings of special education teachers is another way. A number of years ago we did go to those meetings, but we have not gone lately.

Ms. Sugimura: One of our target groups for publicity should be the parents. Very few of the parents come to the library. The teachers know about our resources, but the parents do not know what is available.

Ms. Ranger: We have held a number of adult programs here but very few children's programs, and the programs are good publicity, too. Lorna Lau has the classes visiting regularly, but we have not done anything else to encourage the children and their parents to come in. But this year, for our National Library Week program, our featured entertainer had a program aimed at children as well as adults. This was the first time that we had had a combined program. The children came to the Christmas program as guests, so they mingled with the adults, but they were not really part of the program.

Ms. Sugimura: I heard an adult who attended comment that the National Library Week program was too childish. We have to be careful about that. We can include the children, but how will the adults feel? Generally the response of the adults at that program was positive, but I do not know how many felt like that one person who spoke up.

I suggest that we make our library more attractive, too. Libraries for the blind always seem to be unattractive storehouses, and our library is a maze. For someone who cannot see it is not very comfortable; it is all metal and book stacks. And because we are running out of space we may have to put our books on even higher shelves, further from the reach of the children.

Ms. Lau: But then, we are one of the few libraries for the blind and handicapped where children can come into the stack area.

Ms. Sugimura: It would be nice to have one room set aside for children, where they could sit and enjoy the library and not be confined to library tables and hard seats. Was it the Chicago library I visited where there were beanbag chairs? The room looked very comfortable and attractive, too, with many colors and rounded corners. People wonder why we should make libraries for the blind attractive. One reason is that we have walk-in patrons, but in addition we have other handicapped people who can see the library and can appreciate an attractive library.

If I were a blind child, the most important things about the library would be having a person there who cares and having the right materials. Lorna Lau spends much time with the children and they really enjoy her, so they are excited about coming to the library. But if she simply let them go into the stacks, the library would not be as important or as enjoyable as it is for them.

Ms. Ranger: I do not know whether we can justify it, because of the small number of children, but it would be very nice if we could have a person to devote a large amount of time to children's programming, and a space where we could have the programs take place.

Ms. Sugimura: The teachers have to encourage library use, too. Our print collection about handicapped issues does not get much use from the teachers or the parents, because they are too busy. We see very few parents. Maybe some of the teachers are lazy, but most of them simply do not have the time. Some of them are not trained to teach special education. But they should not simply tell us to select books for their students. We should work together. We know the books and the teachers know the children.

Ms. Lau: And they can tell us precisely the level that the children are reading on.

Ms. Sugimura: But the responsibility falls back on us again. We need

to spend more time with the teachers so that we can work out a better arrangement.

Lorna Lau
Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
Honolulu, Hawaii

I joined the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in August 1981, starting in braille transcribing. Then when an opportunity to work in public services arose I took it.

I became involved with the visually handicapped children last year when Amy Shimamoto started teaching them at Waikiki Elementary School. She wanted to expose them to the library, so she asked if she could bring her students here on a regular basis, every week during the school year. This year, however, we could not work out a weekly schedule, so they come every other week.

The library class includes both braille and large-print readers. Some of these children may have come to the library before with another teacher, but never on a regular basis, except for one girl. In general, these children were only borrowing books when they had school assignments. Now on Saturdays some of the children come in with their families. I am pleased to see that the library class interests the children in reading, improves their skills, and encourages them to use the library. Sometimes they become excited about the books and whisper to each other, and I have to remind them to be quiet. I wish the library had more than one copy of each book, because now they have to take turns with the good ones.

I took the children's visits step by step from the beginning and had lessons prepared for them each time. Since our collection of large-print materials is small, we have made an arrangement with the public library next door and the teacher's aide takes the large-print readers over there while we work with the braille readers here. During their visits we have instruction followed by exercises in large type and braille. For the exercises I always try to pick authors that we have in the library, because it is disappointing for the children to work on something and then hear "But we don't have that book." I try to make the exercises like "hide and seek" games or treasure hunts. In fact, one of my exercises was to go on

a treasure hunt and find certain books in the stacks. The children enjoy activities like that.

The first time the children visited we introduced the library with a tour, starting in this room, their home base. We told them that when they came in each week they should head for this table and then, after announcements, the instruction would begin. We showed them the circulation desk and the stacks to give them their bearings. We explained that there is a bell at the circulation desk, so that if they arrive and do not hear any voices they can ring it to call somebody to come and help them.

Then the children learned how to check out books. I told them, "You can't walk out of the library without checking out books." They also learned about our Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), which they were very interested in; they all wanted to play with it and type out their names. We showed them the children's record collection, the braille card catalog, and where the children's books are shelved in the stacks. They have to count six shelves from the very end of the stacks before they get to the children's section. We also have the shelves labeled for them in braille and large print. The children were told not to panic if they pull out a book and are not sure where to put it back. Their instructions were to put the book on the side of the shelf or give it to one of the staff members. We try to instill the idea that since we have only one copy of each book, the children have to be responsible for it. We teach them how to use the library independently and how to be responsible for the books.

I think on that first day the children were excited, and apprehensive, too. Usually books are presented to them by telling them, "These are the books you are going to cover in class." But here I told them, "You get to choose your own books, so be thinking of titles you want to read." I preselected titles of braille and Twin Vision books, pulled the books off the shelves, and placed one in front of each child, saying, "Read the label on the side of the book because that is going to tell you the title of the book and the author." They learned that they did not have to look through the whole book to find the essential information.

Next I gave lessons on how the books are shelved. The students had to learn that fiction books are filed alphabetically by the author's last name. Their first exercise was to alphabetize authors and titles on cards.

I also had the children work with the Dewey Decimal System, because

in our library the braille books are still filed by Dewey. Other NLS network libraries arrange their braille by accession number, but we felt that, even though we are eventually going to use accession numbers, the children still need to know about the Dewey system because the other libraries are organized that way. The children need the traditional library background, even though they might not use it later. The children were given braille and large-type copies of the exercise on the Dewey Decimal System, which consisted of subjects that they were to match to a list of numbers. The children did well at this and they understood the concept. Then I took the children back to the shelves and let them feel the labels again, so that they would know where the Dewey Decimal numbers are on the book labels. By actually feeling the numbers on the books they understood why we did the exercise.

I thought the children should learn about our braille card catalog, in order to be able to find books on their own. They would rather find the books faster by having me get them, but I make them use the catalog for themselves. To teach them I selected braille catalog cards for books that I knew were on the shelves, substituting large-print cards for the large-print readers. (These catalog cards are modified for use in this library. They include only basic information to enable the braille readers to find the books on the shelves.) I picked out the different types of cards that they would encounter—author, title, and subject—and explained how the information is arranged on the cards. I told the children about the copyright dates we are now putting on the cards to let them know whether they have a newer book or an older book so that when they are doing research they can get a good cross section of books.

For one of their exercises I picked out titles and arranged the catalog cards in my hand as in a card trick. They picked two cards each. Then they had to go to the catalog and pick out the author and subject cards to go along with the cards they had pulled. Finally, they went to the shelf, found the books, and brought me the books with all the cards in them.

I gave the class lessons on how to use the *Talking Book Topics* catalog in large type and in braille. All the children worked on the same issue. First we discussed what the cover looks like and I told them that they would receive the catalog every two months. I told them what issue they were holding and where it comes from—the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital. The Library of Congress is not real for them because it is far away and they have never been there. But

the most important thing is to let them know what they have in their hands and where it comes from. I explained what a table of contents is and how it is arranged. I also showed the children the mailing envelope, the order sheets, and the descriptions of each book. Then they knew that there was a set format. They are used to *Talking Book Topics* now and know how to use it.

Because they have the opportunity to listen to *Talking Book Topics* on record, we discussed how to use the talking book machine. Some of them had never seen one. I told them how to listen for the different tones on each side. I explained what was on the records in braille on each side, gave each a record and machine, and went down the line, instructing them individually. I put the record on 33-⅓ rpm and had all the children put the needle on the record and count their tones. As soon as they got to the third tone I had them switch back to 8 rpm and we listened to see if they were on the children's books. So now they have experience with the talking book machine, too.

We learned about the *Braille Book Review* the same way we learned about *Talking Book Topics*. Each child had his or her own issue and I went over the format with them. I went through the *Braille Book Review* step by step, showing the children how to select their books. Also, since our braille is filed by Dewey and the *Braille Book Review* lists only accession numbers, the children had to go to the braille card catalog to find out the Dewey number if they wanted to find a book in the library.

Next we studied the *Talking Book Encyclopedia*, with which they had hands-on experience. We went over the instructions on how to find the right cassette, track, and index number, and then I selected a subject for each child to work on. After the initial instructions were given, they had to pull out the volume and index, find the cassette, and fix the dials on the machine. Then they had to play it for me so that I would know they had the right cassette. I think they became confused about the different tracks, so they had to keep the index open to the page they were using so they could always go back and check what they were doing. Sometimes they had the right cassette but were on the wrong track; they did not set the dial right or they forgot which track to use. But they loved the *Talking Book Encyclopedia* set-up and everyone wanted to try the special machine.

The teacher later assigned reports to the children. They had to pick their own subjects and then find them in the *Talking Book Encyclopedia*.

They could also use the regular braille and large-print books as sources. But we had only one special machine to play the encyclopedia tapes on. Cassette tracks A and C will play correctly on NLS cassette machines but the other two tracks will play backward. We were lucky, though, because all the children picked subjects that were on tracks A and C. One person used the *Talking Book Encyclopedia* machine and the others had individual NLS cassette machines. They all had their own earphones so they could listen to the tapes by themselves and stop and go when they wanted to. Also, they all had their braille writers and the large-print readers could write, so we supplied them with paper and they did their reports. The teacher has her own *Talking Book Encyclopedia* at the school so now it is available to them if they want to use it there.

I am very pleased with the children's program. The children in the third to sixth grades do absorb the information, although the library lessons may be a little too difficult for the younger ones. But the main thing is that we expose them to the books and make the library experience a pleasant one. The large-type readers can check out print books at any library and use the closed-circuit television magnifiers in their classroom to enlarge the print. But the braille readers have to use this library; their school collection of braille is mainly textbooks.

I have enjoyed watching the children learn how to find their own books in the library. They are excited about it, too. When the children get to the shelves, sometimes they will become confused, partly because the children are so small. We can tell the children a book is on the top shelf, but they never feel the top shelf. We have six shelves with metal dividers so they are instructed to feel for the ranges, feel for the metal dividers. Even that has to be taught because otherwise they will go straight across and miss the ranges because the metal dividers are tucked inside.

When we finish a lesson I continue to quiz the children to refresh them, starting with easy questions and then moving to harder ones. But basically I keep going back to how the books are shelved.

The children have to be readers already in order to come to the library and learn how to use our resources on their own. So this type of class exposure helps children who are reluctant readers. The regular visits also help because they have to return their books, which prompts them to read them. Perhaps none of these children would ever come to the library on their own. Unless I select books for them I do not know if

they are using the library. Yet sometimes they do send in for books on their own and I am glad to know that they do. At the end of the last school year I gave them large-print and braille catalogs and told them to telephone us if they wanted any books. Some of the children ordered books, and others played.

When the children are working on reports they get their material here. One boy came into the library today and had chosen only one book to use for his research. I explained to him that there are many books written on the same subject and that when he does his report he has to use different sources. I told him he cannot go to one book and say, "These are the facts and these are the only facts." I also tell the children that if they read one book by a certain author they like, the library may have other books by that same author. One child has read all the Encyclopedia Brown books in our collection and still wants more. It is good to let them know that there are other books to read and that there are other mystery books besides Frank Dixon and Carolyn Keene.

It is very difficult for these children when their sighted friends are talking about certain books and they want to read the same books but we do not have them on cassette or in braille. If we cannot get a book from the regular NLS collection, we will try to have it recorded. So far we have been lucky, though; we have been able to get what they have wanted. We explained to the children, too, that we can order books through the multistate center; it will take longer but the books will go directly to them. I also mentioned hand-copied braille to them, but I do not know if they remember that because mostly they want the press braille. I have told them that if they do come across a BRA designation in the *Braille Book Review* that they want they should let us know and we will order it for them. Generally, though, they want the books immediately so they do not even pick the BRAs.

On special occasions a retired teacher tells stories at the library. She tries to fit the story with the occasion. When we celebrated Dr. Seuss's birthday at the library, we wrote a letter to him and received a thank you note for the children. So they now know that this author is actually living. The teacher read *The Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins* that day. We celebrated Thanksgiving and she told a story. She always asks the children questions about the stories to involve them.

Through the library, the children can be exposed to the different types of literature and the different worlds of the imagination. One day it

could be fairy tales and the next day it could be science fiction. Reading can create whatever world a child is in tune with. I try to find for our patrons books that their friends are talking about and that they can relate to, such as *Charlie Brown's Super Answer and Question Book*. They know who Charlie Brown is and that is one way of interesting the children in nonfiction. They have all listened to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Star Wars*, and *E.T.*

I am not sure whether these children go to a regular public library on their own. I went to the library myself as a child, but it was only when I was in the fifth grade and we had to go to the library every week that I developed a strong interest in books. The children must actually be in the library to learn to love books. The children's librarian at the public library when I was a child was a good influence; she gave a good feeling to the library and that can attract children.

We are very lucky because the children's teacher wanted to bring the children over and they became a captive audience. If we had to pull the children together from all different time schedules ourselves that might be difficult. Also, the school is within walking distance of the library. If the school were further away, even getting the children together would be an obstacle.

Kay Smith
Wayne County Regional Library
Wayne, Michigan

Return of the Jedi is going to be very popular this summer, so the theme of our summer reading program for children up to eleven years of age will be "Be a Star Invader." My name, as the person the children telephone to report to, will be RCRD, just like R2D2, the *Star Wars* robot. I am going to be an android, though, a slightly human being, so that I do not have to sound like a robot over the telephone. The library will be Spaceship Earth and the children will call us to give us a list of the books they want to read, mostly from the reading list we mail to them. We hope this theme will interest the children in reading this summer.

I sent a letter to the teachers at certain schools that have learning-disabled students, hoping that the teachers would encourage the children

to join the summer reading program. In the letter I stressed that the program would be strictly for fun.

We are also going to make a cassette tape to mail to the children. On the tape Barbara Goral, the head of the library, is going to be the commander of Spaceship Earth, inviting the children to become involved in the summer reading program. The tape will sound like a commercial and repeat the important information several times. Once the children call me for more details I will encourage them, explain the summer reading program, and tell them that they can have as many books as they want. I will say that there are many good stories to read and they do not necessarily have to follow the bibliography of "Be a Star Invader." They can read any books they want to.

I will be sending a note to the children along with the tape. It will say, "Be a star invader and get to blast off on a reading adventure you will never forget. Call Spaceship Earth and give us a list of the books you would like to explore. Our communication devices will be operational Monday to Friday between 0930 hours and 1730 hours. Communication device numbers are. . . ."

We will also be sending a letter to parents to tell them that we are going to have this program and that a separate letter addressed to their children will contain the bibliography and a little note. We thought the children would feel more important if they were sent a separate mailing.

The recording will be on cassette only and since some of the children do not have cassette players they will not understand the program. But even those who can play the cassette will not necessarily understand. Last year we sent out only a cassette, with no explanatory note, and the children did not understand it. That is why we are sending a letter to the parents this year to further explain the program. Our response last year was very small, only 10 percent of the children enrolled. But the ones who did read—and there were a couple of children who read quite a few books—seemed to be very enthusiastic.

This year we will be sending the announcement and the tape to twenty-six learning-disabled children, nineteen blind children, five visually handicapped children, and two children who are physically handicapped. If I can persuade most of the blind children to participate—and any of the learning-disabled children—I will be happy.

During the school year the children do call up and ask for books, but during the summer not many of them will call. Sometimes if I can get a

child to read even one book I am doing well. Some of the children with learning disabilities do not like anything that has to do with reading; they do not want to listen to books either. Once school is out, they would rather do something other than read, because they have had such a struggle with books and learning during the school year. Even the blind children—most of whom are not totally blind—like to do things other than read, especially in this age group. I was surprised last year that I had better luck attracting boys to the program than girls; our camping theme may have been the reason.

Last year, in keeping with the camping theme, my name was Poison Ivy. At the end of the program the children who participated and read at least one book were sent a "Camp Wanna Read a Book" T-shirt and a little pin with the same logo. The children look forward to a little gift of some sort and we are trying to think of what to give them this year, although we do not want to tell them ahead of time that they will receive a reward for reading. Last year when I was trying to decide on an award for the summer reading program I thought of many sorts of things, but could not think of something tactile.

Some of our children have sighted brothers and sisters who are involved in the public library's summer reading program—a big program in which children become extremely involved. Now many of our young patrons have their own special reading program. And many times when a brother or sister borrows a certain book from the public library we can get the same book on cassette or record for our patron.

In the public library the librarians have to spot-check to make sure the children read the books, but most of the children in our program do listen to the entire books. That is quite an accomplishment for them, because it takes a long time to listen to a book.

When a child finishes reading a book he or she is supposed to telephone me and tell me about it. Sometimes the child will talk on and on. I will listen and then ask some questions. But if the child hesitates or does not know what to say, I will ask, "Can you tell me a little bit about it? I don't know anything about that subject." Or, if the child has just read a book on mosquitoes, I will ask, "Do mosquitoes live forever? They sure seem to!" These leading questions help the child start.

I do not have much contact with teachers because most of them are too busy, but there is one teacher who seems to be more active than the others. She knows what she wants, calls up, and orders it. Other than

that, most of my contact is with the parents. They call for books on particular subjects or for the classics that they read as children.

Our problem is that we cannot bring the children to the library. Once in a while a child will come in with a parent to pick up some books, but that happens very seldom. Most of the children are so far away that they do not have the chance to come in. That is why I like to talk to them as much as I can when they call; it is the only way that I can reach most of them.

We feel sorry for the children who cannot visit, who have nobody to bring them here. I almost wonder if I should start a program, knowing that only certain children can come to it, and that there will be some who will want very much to attend but have no way of getting here.

In the public library, librarians have personal contact with the children and they can set up a visual environment in the library that is exciting for the children, with posters and displays. The librarians can play games with the children in the library. Here our options are more limited. We are constantly trying to imagine what would be better for these children, what would interest them. I do not know of any other library that has a summer reading program like ours, but I keep looking in the journals for some ideas that will appeal to these children.

Barbara Goral
Wayne County Regional Library
Wayne, Michigan

Reading should not be a task; it should be fun. That is how we should present reading, even to seventeen-year-olds who can read only at the second-grade level. We are not failing in this. The failure has to do with the classroom and the home situations. We never hear from some learning-disabled and reading-disabled children. We send out equipment, but many times we must write, "You haven't ordered anything in a year. Please send us the machines back."

Many teachers borrow only textbooks from Recording for the Blind. Textbooks are not fun, and nobody wants to read textbooks all the time. If the teachers brought something fun and recreational into the classroom from this library, the children might be a little more interested in reading.

I can tell which teachers are readers themselves and which are not by

their students' behavior. A learning-disabled or visually impaired child whose teacher is a reader is a child who actively uses our services. One of the teachers of the visually handicapped frequently calls us and knows all of us by name. She will order six books for one of her students so that he has something to choose from. Maybe the teachers think it is the parents' responsibility to encourage library use or the parents think it is the teachers' responsibility. Maybe the parents and teachers do not think the library is important, or maybe the children fight their efforts to use the library, so the parents give up.

The young-adult services committee in our public library system started the "Computer Pix" program about two years ago. The first year about three hundred children were involved, and when they opened the program to all the libraries last year five thousand young adults took part. We thought, "If five thousand young people are interested in this, why not give it a try?" Some of our children seem to be interested in computers, so we are hopeful that this will be a successful program. Computers are a gimmick, a hook, to draw the young people here and interest them. They will be sent large-print computer cards and they will mark their reading interests on those cards. Then we will input this information into the computer, the computer will select the books, and we will send them out to the children, along with the reading lists the computer generates. Our computer is set up to select nine titles. We will send out four of those initially and then, if interested, the child can call us and ask for the other five.

I would like to see this as an ongoing program, because these young people's interests will be changing. A young girl who is interested in books in the "Female," "Friendship," and "Love" categories this year may be interested in books in the "Female," "Male," and "Identity" categories next year.

The "Computer Pix" program is funded through LSCA, and we have a fairly large database of 240 titles. A professional librarian produced the database. Every year we plan to update the subject listings in the computer, update the patron computer cards, and update the database, taking out books that are old or not being used much. Then, even if the young adults pick the same categories every year, they will have different books to read.

Our database includes some short books and some books with simple themes, because the librarian working on it realized that some of the

children using the program would be reading disabled. These children do not want something long. They want something that is fast and snappy.

We have summer reading programs in which the children can read as much as they want. It is grueling for some of these children to sit down and read a book. Our policy is that if you sign up for the program and read even one book you have completed the program. We do not want to make the program competitive.

Our program has not involved the young readers in the library. We hope that "Computer Pix" and the summer reading program will change that. I would like to start a young-adult newsletter, too, very soon. If I do, I would like the children in the community to help with it. I am interested in making the newsletter newsy and fun. It should stress the fact that there are good things to read at the library, but not stress the library. I would like to interview local sports figures and also use some of the interviews with movie stars from *Dynomite* magazine. I want the newsletter to be something that will catch the children's interest. If I mention a couple of titles here and there they may call up and say, "Please send those books out to me. I'm interested in reading them."

We usually find juvenile readers through the schools, the Greater Detroit Society for the Blind, and the Rehabilitation Institute. Often we speak to Lions Clubs, Kiwanis, and other groups to reach people who know eligible children. I do not know if we are missing any children, but one way that we might find out is through more public service announcements. The public service announcements that are available now are aimed at adults. If they featured a well-loved children's character, such as Kermit the Frog or someone from *Return of the Jedi*, or even a rock group for the young adults, these announcements might attract more children to our services.

I think, though, that most of the reading-disabled children are being referred to us. Getting them to use the service is our problem. Generally, the service does not work for children who do not have supportive families and teachers or for children who are learning disabled. Maybe the teachers who are working with the learning-disabled children do not know about our service. The NLS program works when the parents and the teacher work together with the child, but it does not work if parent or teacher support is missing. Some parents do not even know that their children are signed up for the library program. I feel frustrated about this problem. I am not a parent, so I do not know how I would react, but I

think that if I had a handicapped child, I would want to make sure that my child used every resource that was available.

Some parents have simply given up because of the frustration of dealing with a handicapped child. Sometimes all the children in a family will be disabled, and it must be tiresome dealing with two, three, or maybe four children who have a learning disability or a visual handicap. Also, parents do not know whom to turn to. They can come to the library but we can provide only so much support service for them. We can tell them whom to contact to get more services, but if the people we refer them to do not help, the parents think we are giving them misinformation. I want the people at the other agencies to respond as well as I have, but many times they do not.

I do not know how we can help the parents more. We provide the summer reading program and we send a letter to the parents to tell them about it. And if a child is not using the service, we send a letter out "to the parents of so-and-so" so that they know that their child has our equipment and is not using the library. But should we form a support group for the parents? There is a group for parents of learning-disabled children, and I am sure there are other groups for people whose children are visually or physically handicapped.

I do not know where my responsibility ends. I do not want to say that I am only a librarian and all I do is provide books for the visually and physically handicapped, because librarians should provide much more. We are information specialists. Yet, does my responsibility end when I give someone the information, or should I follow up on it? I imagine most regional and subregional libraries have the same staffing problems we do. How much service are we supposed to provide with the limited staff and money that we have? We are always looking for new readers; we are constantly speaking to groups. I will talk to anybody about the service, and I have business cards on me and information in my briefcase at all times.

If I could make improvements in the program, I would probably add more relevant young-adult material, books that the children in the public library are reading right now. Judy Blume was fine in 1978; Judy Blume is not fine now. Probably the main obstacle to children's using the library fully is the lack of timely new titles. Our materials are being produced too slowly. Jackie Robinson was a great baseball player, but a ten-year-old now does not care much about him. Children like things

that are *new*. If you ask them what they want for Christmas, they can tell you the newest toy and the newest video game. For them what was new last year is old this year. An adult's conception of time and a child's conception of time are completely different. What happened to a child two weeks ago is very old. So the relatively new books should be brought out as soon as possible.

I would probably organize a caucus of young adults and find out what they wanted to read. There should be some young adults involved in the NLS Book Selection Committee. Why can't a young adult go to Washington? Why is it always an adult? The young adults are involved in the program but they really have no rights; they have no real say in what they are going to be reading. Adults are making decisions for the children who are fourteen or fifteen years old.

NLS is doing a fairly good job in providing children's literature. But we must have more high-interest, low-vocabulary materials. We must have more books with handicapped heroes and heroines, but the solution to this problem lies more with the publishing industry than with NLS. Maybe we should make the authors of young-adult and children's books aware of the fact that they are not reaching this group of handicapped teenagers. Why can't a seventeen-year-old boy or girl in a wheelchair fall in love? Why does it always have to be the strong, athletic boy who falls in love with the cheerleader? Our children have the same identity problems as any young adults do, but they have the added dimension of having a disability. Why can't we bring this out in books? I would like to see handicapped children and young adults reading books they can identify with.

Our library does not provide braille books, so I am unfamiliar with braille. The cassette books are okay, but NLS might do better to put young-adult and children's books in a container of a different kind or color. That would help us to identify the books and would also show the children that they are a special part of the service.

Probably three-quarters of our children do not use record players; record players are not "cool" to use. I am eager to get some kind of "Walkman" cassette player for the children. They would use it, and they would not be so apprehensive about taking the cassette machine with them to school, because it would be like something that every other child had. They would not stand out in the crowd with an ugly green or orange machine. Young people want to be part of the group and in order

to be part of the group they must have the same things that everyone else has. A "Walkman" might help the service catch on with young adults. But maybe nothing will help. By the time a learning-disabled child becomes a young adult there may not be much we can do.

Perhaps the reason I feel frustrated about learning-disabled children is that they are not willing to take the service I am offering. I do not know much about learning-disabled people, but I know that a learning-disabled person who is sixteen or seventeen years old and has a third-grade reading level does not want to read a book for third graders. Maybe we should be developing more high-interest, low-vocabulary materials for that person. The story must be short, it must be exciting, and must be finished quickly. Children love music. It would be ideal to have taped short stories with some music in the background to add interest. If a learning-disabled child actually enjoyed listening to a story, that child might go back again and listen to another story sometime. But if we provide a long, drawn-out book, two or three cassettes on four sides, the child is going to give up.

Librarians need more training in working with the learning disabled and perhaps something could be done on the national level. Maybe NLS could bring someone to a conference to talk to us about learning-disabled children, to give us an idea of what they go through when they sit down to read a book. Those of us who have no problem reading do not understand.

People still request the print-record combinations and we refer them to the local public library. I would like to see NLS produce some of these combinations again, though, and maybe include paperbacks in the container this time.

I would also like to see NLS provide a separate *Talking Book Topics* for children and young adults. They receive the same catalogs the adults receive, with their books listed in the back of the book, as an afterthought. Why can't we do something special for the young adults and the children? Their catalog does not have to be as dry as the adult *Talking Book Topics*. Why can't we add some background music or read the children's annotations with a little more life? Why should children have to go through all of the adult material to get to their books? A ten-year-old is not interested in the nonfiction books that are available to adults. Also, the annotations are written for adults, so that adults will read them and decide what their children should read. We should make annotations

for the children and young adults to read so they can decide what books they want to read themselves. We could even add excerpts from the books in the annotations to help the children decide.

We have to do something special for children and young adults to get them to use the services. If we have a good gimmick that attracts their attention, then they will read. If we simply say, "Hey, it's fun to read," or "Hey, come to the library and check out a book," they are going to laugh at us. They can go instead to the video arcade or go home and turn on the Atari or HBO.

Janet Wright
Talking Book Center
Athens, Georgia

We do much work through the public schools and the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA), which works with blind and low-vision children. I call the boards of education in our fifteen-county area in the summer to see if I can talk to the teachers during their in-service training days in the fall. I like to talk to all the teachers at once, not only to special education teachers or the teachers of the learning disabled, because regular teachers may discover children in their classes with reading problems. Some of the teachers will also have relatives or friends who need the service, so I do reach many people through these visits.

Teachers do not know about talking books unless we tell them or they have worked with talking books elsewhere. In university programs, talking books are covered in one class period, very generally, and it is difficult for teachers to apply such a small amount of theoretical knowledge to the local situation. Perhaps NLS could help by working through the National Education Association (NEA). Or maybe the American Library Association's Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA) could do something with NEA.

We are not serving all the children who are eligible; there are always areas we miss. Sometimes I miss a county for a few years and all the new teachers do not know about us and are too busy to make an effort to find out about our service. In particular we might miss learning-disabled children, because the children who are blind or physically handicapped have teachers who are more likely to look for outside resources. Also,

CESA reaches all the blind people in the counties we serve and signs them up with us. But some of the physically handicapped or multiply handicapped children might be missed.

I belong to a group called the Community Resource Council. Very soon we are going to start a computerized information and referral service in this area. Because all of the information will be on computer, it will be fairly easy to keep up to date. I will be able to pull out exactly the information I want for a person by location, by age, by income, and so forth. We have been working on this service for a couple of years. The idea came from a workshop we held a few years ago for handicapped people and their families to decide what their greatest needs were. The two greatest needs that they identified were transportation and information, and because I am a librarian, I was very interested in their information needs. Now everybody in the community is involved. People from the telephone company, the newspaper, and the radio station are on the advisory board. Soon anyone will be able to telephone and learn about available resources. And this information service will help parents a great deal.

It is very difficult to maintain communication with the schools and teachers because we serve fifteen counties and the teachers are constantly moving from school to school. The children also move to other schools or to other counties. It is hard to keep track of the machines because the teachers pass them on to other teachers instead of returning them to us. I have to go to the schools with a list of the teachers who are supposed to be there and the students and machines they are supposed to have. I have actually been going into closets looking for the machines and going into the school libraries to pick them up. The school librarians become very distressed if I take away a talking book machine that is not checked out to anybody in that school. They want me to call ahead and give them a receipt when I take a machine.

It is better if I can find a teacher in each county to coordinate things for me. In one county a teacher signed up every teacher who had learning-disabled children and every child she felt would benefit from the program. It was wonderful! But then she moved to South Carolina. Now we have a teacher-coordinator in another county who is doing very well. She meets the new teachers when they first come into the schools, tells them about talking books, and signs up all the children who are eligible. Then throughout the school year she calls to tell us what

children are still there, what records we need to change, and what machines might need exchanging.

We recorded the book, *Steps to Independence for People with Learning Disabilities*, for the older children and the adults who have learning disabilities. The book was written by Dale Brown, who has a learning disability himself. It is good for our patrons to listen to that book and realize that they are not the only ones with this problem. Many of the problems of learning-disabled children have to do with their parents, and if I can get their parents to listen to the book it helps them understand what their children are encountering.

We have a newsletter for children called *Flash*, in which we publicize some of our new books and new materials. It goes to teachers, parents, and children; we say it is for "kids and people who are interested in them."

Right now we do not have a summer reading program per se. Through our newsletter and through other contacts we encourage children to join their regular public library summer reading clubs where they live. We contact the librarians and make sure that they have a deposit collection of talking books at the right age level, and make sure that they realize that the blind and handicapped children may want to join their summer reading clubs. It is better for children to join the local library's summer reading program because they can become part of the regular group.

Wombat is a children's magazine produced and edited here in Athens. Its articles, poems, drawings, and stories are contributed by children, with one guest article written by an adult in each issue. It is very imaginative. We decided that some of our younger readers might like to listen to it, so we started recording *Wombat*. The first issue we recorded included a poem written by one of our readers in an outlying county, a little boy who is physically handicapped. We sent him a copy of the magazine when we finished recording it.

High school students record *Wombat* for us, and as they do they are learning about talking books. They also learn how to use a tape recorder and how to read perfectly. They are very strict with each other! When we first started this project we told the students about the standards; they cannot slur words and must read exactly what is in the print to be fair to the listeners. Now they are harder on each other than I would be. One teenager reads, one monitors, and one communicates between them.

Three of them are involved at all times, and another waits to take a turn; they change positions so that they all get to do everything.

Wombat comes out about every other month, but we are not quite up to date on it because these fifteen-year-olds are very busy with school. I wrote an article about talking books for *Wombat* and included a picture of all the children who are doing the recording. For the article I interviewed them to find out why they had volunteered. They simply said, "It's better than doing nothing."

I would like very much to present puppet shows and use puppets with groups of handicapped children, the way another of our subregional librarians does. There is a possibility that we can work something out with a children's librarian in the public library who is very interested in puppets and very enthusiastic about talking books.

We receive many requests for material with music and sound effects, especially for very young children, who are not interested in simply listening to somebody read. A book catches their attention much more if it has music and sound effects. Also, in response to other requests we bought some special tapes for children called "About Tastes," "About Feelings," and "About Anger." They are for children who need help in handling their feelings. Many of these handicapped children need more help handling their frustrations than able-bodied children might. These good stories help them understand their feelings without being obviously didactic. I have to listen to the tapes before I know which children to send them to.

If we had more time to spend with the children's program we could do a better job and if we had more staff we could do a better job at getting the books out and contacting the children by telephone. I would like to do more for parents, too, and have more information on hand for them. We have purchased books on raising handicapped children and understanding the effects a handicapped child has on the family. I would like to publicize these books more. They are not used very much but they should be, because parents do not have the information; nobody gives it to them. When a handicapped child is born, the doctors do not talk to parents about what it means for the whole family.

We had a learning-disabled child who canceled talking books because she became upset when she heard the phrase "recorded solely for the use of the blind and physically handicapped" at the beginning of a book. That sentence made her feel more handicapped than she felt she was. If

the children's recordings could say simply, "Recorded for the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped," it would help.

NLS has done a good job in selecting books for children and young adults, but we have a real need for high-interest, low-vocabulary books, especially on the high school level. We have bought some that teach basic skills such as how to handle money and how to buy a car. We have purchased print books and recorded them and we have purchased whatever we could find that is already recorded. We have even purchased little pamphlets on insurance and savings accounts because some of these learning-disabled children lack all of those basic skills. They cannot get the information from print and many of them are not getting it from their families, so they need these recordings. The teachers try to teach them, but they have a hard time and they also need these materials.

We have also bought whatever high-interest, low-vocabulary material we could find in large print. Some of the books that we have in that category, for example, are on motorcycles, skateboards, baseball, and boats, because learning-disabled children are interested in these subjects, and there is sometimes little else they are interested in reading about, because the NLS collection does not cover these subjects on the right level we have been trying to provide the materials ourselves.

We receive so many requests for tapes with print books that we have purchased many print books to go along with our tapes. We have also purchased some of the combination tape and print books from Weston Woods. Although we have managed to stretch our budget in this area, I do not want to give the impression that money is easy to come by.

The only time we have interaction with parents is when they bring their children into the Talking Book Center. Some parents will bring their children in often, but not all parents do. That is unfortunate because much of our contact with the children depends on the parents! If the parents do not bring the children in or call us, then the children do not know that we are real people. In fact, some of the parents do not know that we are real people! It is much better to have some kind of contact with them. But our service to children is very similar in this respect to public library service to able-bodied children, because the library users are the children whose parents are interested in reading and who bring their children into libraries.

This is not true in our outlying counties, though, because there the distances interfere with library use. But we have some children who come into the Talking Book Center in Athens by themselves. I do not know how they get here, but they do. Maybe their parents leave them at the Talking Book Center while they do errands. Then these children pick out the books that they want and talk to us about them.

This service should be more accessible locally to children. The biggest obstacles to this are funding and our own training in library school. When many librarians graduate, they do not know anything about this service. A person who is not interested in service to the print handicapped is unlikely to investigate it and unlikely to have the attitude that library service ought to be available to print-handicapped people.

Ideally we would have as many talking book branches in all the little towns as there are branches of the public library, so all handicapped children would know that there is a library service for them. We try to keep deposit collections in the branch libraries, but the librarians there have very little space and they keep trying to send the talking books back. We have to keep repeating, "This collection is for demonstration purposes. It may not be used a lot, but at least it's here and people will see it and ask questions about it."

Johanna Nagel
New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped
Trenton, New Jersey

Publicity

This is my first year here and my first goal was to contact schools. Since I had been working at the state library as a consultant to schools and school media services, I was hired as someone who would know how to start reaching the schools. In New Jersey each county has an education office headed by a county superintendent of schools. On his staff is a supervisor for child study, who meets monthly with all the district coordinators for special education. This seemed like a good place to start, so I contacted all the county offices and I went to meetings in all but one of the twenty-one counties in New Jersey. At the meetings I spoke about what we had to offer for about fifteen or twenty minutes, and then I gave out a flyer with my name and phone number boldly emblazoned on it. I also handed out our library's brochure and the

booklet from NLS on children and teens. I answered questions, left some application forms, and told them I hoped they would share this information with their special education people.

I know that in some districts the coordinators did share the information, because I have had calls from some special education teachers and we arranged service for some of their students. But there are other places that I have not heard from; either they have not shared the information or they do not have anyone in their school who is eligible. I know that in some instances the information has not filtered down, because I have talked to special education teachers who are surprised to hear about talking books. I am not so naive as to assume that I am an extraordinarily charismatic person who overwhelms all of the district coordinators immediately. It is going to take time to reach everyone. But it was very important to visit the county offices and let them see me, because a name on a piece of paper means nothing unless it can be connected with a face.

Then I decided to contact school librarians, or educational media specialists, as they are called in New Jersey. I did not necessarily see them as the people who would initiate the talking book service, although that is a possibility, but they are the resource people in schools. They should be aware of what is available so that if there are children in their schools who need special help they can advise the special education teachers about our services. So I have been going to the county meetings of the Educational Media Association.

I also want to contact the special education teachers directly. In New Jersey we probably have six or seven hundred school districts, so this could mean a large amount of paperwork. I talked to the child study supervisor here in Mercer County, whom I met as a consequence of my visits, and we discussed how best to communicate with special education teachers. I was looking for a feasible way to distribute information and make myself available for in-service sessions with them. I understand that they attend meetings at the county office, which would be a great way to distribute information.

When I go to meetings of teachers and talk to them about eligibility they do not ask me any questions; they seem to know what I am talking about. They probably know more about eligibility than I do because they deal with eligibility definitions all the time. I feel as if I have to go back to school to learn some of the definitions. I thought that *dyslexia* was an

acceptable term, but I find that the New Jersey Department of Education does not recognize dyslexia as an identifying label for a disability. In this library we classify every learning disability as neurological impairment, then refine that classification if more information comes in. For instance, if a special education teacher uses the term *dyslexia*, we note *dyslexia* in our patron file *under the broader heading of neurological impairment*.

I feel responsible to be familiar with these terms so that I know what I am talking about. Also, in terms of promotion of our services, I have to learn more about dyslexics. It is not enough to have a feeling that our service is valuable for people. I see myself developing a somewhat consultative role; there is something that I can learn in a very special area that could help teachers who are dealing with a host of things.

Right now I am also trying to work through PTA organizations. That has its limitations, but it is a start. I am not sure how I am going to make the local chapters aware of me and what I have to offer. I want to go out in the field, but I am having a problem contacting the local PTA chapters because the state office does not give out information about the local presidents and their addresses. So I wrote a letter to the president of the PTA explaining to her who I am, what we offer, why I think it is important for people to know about me, and why I view the PTA as a very valuable organization to make parents and teachers generally aware of talking books.

Probably the children who are the most aware of our service are the blind and visually impaired. I am assuming that the New Jersey Commission for the Blind gets to know the majority of these children and then refers them to us. I never had a feeling for the breakdown of our clientele, though, until I looked at the school accounts to start writing letters. I was surprised at the large percentage of children who are classified in our records as blind. We may miss some children who are blind and visually impaired, but reaching these children is not a significant problem. The real problem may be with reaching the physically handicapped and the learning disabled; I would guess that children whose physical disabilities do not allow them to handle the printed page are the ones we might be missing. I see them as more of a problem than the dyslexic children, because we do have a fair number of dyslexic children. Because there is so much emphasis on learning disability, if we communicate with the teachers of the learning disabled they will pro-

mote our service out in the field. And the Commission for the Blind is promoting talking books for the blind and visually impaired, but I do not know who the spokesman is for the physically handicapped children.

New Jersey is setting up nine regional day schools to work with handicapped children whom the school districts have to send to special schools. There are also many private schools that work with handicapped children. These special schools may be the organs through which we could reach many of those handicapped children who cannot handle the printed page. I am not sure that many private or state-run schools are aware of our services, so that is another area that I will have to deal with. I have been shocked to see how many of the statewide district coordinators are unaware of our service, and I am sure that the problem exists in private schools, too.

Any organization has to publicize itself. Look what advertising does to keep products before the public eye. So why do we librarians assume that we do not have to do the same thing? I am trying to build a public identity not only for the library but also for myself as that person within the library with whom parents, teachers, and children can work. We have to humanize this service. It is very easy to dehumanize service in an agency that deals with the whole state.

I have been trying to develop a relationship with commission counselors, because they are my foot in the doors of the schools. But, more important, they are dealing with our core population. In the past they have been dissatisfied with the service; now that the library has a staff member whose primary responsibility is to the children, the climate is different. I have found that the counselors have been much more ready to call me this year, and I have been trying very hard to get things to them immediately if I have them; since materials must be mailed it is impossible to get them to the counselors the day they call. I hope they are beginning to feel that we are truly cooperating with them. I have developed a good relationship with some of the counselors. There is a whole group of counselors that I have not met yet, but time will take care of that. And I have been given carte blanche to hand-circulate books, to do whatever I think is necessary to get the books out to the children quickly. I have bypassed the computer and sent books out without charge-out numbers to get the books to the children quickly; the schools are beginning to feel that I am cooperating with them. That has been a start, but it is very limited, and I am hoping to expand on it.

I find that almost no children call the library themselves. I have a couple of children who call, but they do because their commission counselor encourages them to call. She is in the school with them, puts them on the phone, and makes them do the calling. I have parents who call and make requests for their children, but the children themselves do not call. They have not been encouraged to call, so maybe they will in time.

These children are very protected. All year I have worked with one parent whose son is in high school. I would think that a high school boy could call and request books himself, but it is the mother who always does it. My feeling is that she is very protective of him, but perhaps that is not a valid assumption. For example, she wanted to know whether there is a Kurzweil Reading Machine at Princeton University. She was not going to send her son there for college, but he could get there independently by the bus, and she thought it was important for him to learn to use that machine. In that respect she encourages him to be independent.

The New Jersey Library for the Blind and Handicapped is really trying to make children and parents aware of their library service. When the talking books come routinely into the house of a family with a blind child, the assumption is that the books are coming from the Commission for the Blind, because the family is working with the commission. But that is not the case. We are very distinct agencies doing very distinct things. So part of the concept of programming here is to make these families aware of the state library for the blind and handicapped and to make it seem more like a library to them.

Programming

Part of regular public library service is programming, so we try to do programming here. The first summer that we had something here was the summer I did a special project for the director, while I was still a state library consultant. She wanted a big party for the children and we had invited the Philly Fanatic (the Philadelphia Phillies' mascot) to be the main entertainment, but we were going to have storytelling, give tours of the library, and let the children who could see look at their names on the computer. We had a terrific turnout. It is nice that programs become family events, since the children have to come from long distances; a parent attends, and if there are siblings the siblings come

along, too. We had about sixty people at that first program. Maybe that does not represent many families, but it is a large number of people. Also, we had a great deal of fun, so that encouraged us.

We had a summer reading program that summer, too; if the children had read three books they would get a certificate at the party. We had some response to this reading club, but not a very large one—fewer than ten children. There are about eight hundred children signed up for service here, but some of them have school service and home service, so we are talking about a somewhat smaller number, maybe six hundred children altogether.

When I came to work here, a kite-making party had already been planned as my first program. I was a little afraid because I was not sure what kind of kites we were going to make. After much research I got in touch with people at the Greater Delaware Valley Kite Society who showed me three terrific kites to make. This was a different kind of program, an activity rather than storytelling. Maybe six families with a total of thirty people were here for it. Sixty people had said they were coming, but for some reason they did not all show up. But the people who came had fun.

All the kites flew and, as the Society representative told me, "If it doesn't fly it's not a kite." We had a nice, windy day, which helped. We made three different kites of varying complexity, and we flew each one individually to see what it would do. Maybe that was a little too much kite-making, but I am still feeling my way.

We are not like a local library that can have an hour's program. We have people coming from great distances, so we have to offer something more. We started making kites at 11:30, had a break for lunch, and then quit around 2:00 or 2:30.

Our next event was a Christmas party, which I thought would be fun. It was held on a Saturday. At this holiday party we had some country dancing, carol singing, and a pinata. We also played games and had refreshments. I had about thirty responses to that invitation, which would have been a nice group, but only five people actually came. I called all the people who had responded and some had illness in the family. Many, though, had forgotten, which told me that I must remind people about our events.

I would not hesitate to repeat some of those activities next winter. I had some reservations about how the children would respond to the

country dancing, because I am not sure what they are capable of doing. Dealing with the child first and the handicap second is my philosophy at this point, though. I am not going to be overwhelmed by the handicap. The dance caller and I were able to get the children dancing and it was fun.

I saw a skyscraper-building program at the Mercer County Library which I thought would be good for our patrons because it gave the children a chance to do some constructing and to learn the skyscraper concept. I collected odds and ends of styrofoam from all over the place; in fact, I found a place in Camden where I could load up a truck with styrofoam if I wanted to. We had a sizable turnout for this program, but if a huge number of people had come, I would have been in trouble because I had to move between skyscraper-building groups. We had six groups working and each group had three children in it, plus parents. We worked with styrofoam, toothpicks, and rubber cement to glue the skyscrapers together.

It occurred to me when I was planning this program that visually handicapped children would have no idea what a skyscraper is because they cannot see how high one is. So I talked to the artist at Recording for the Blind and I asked if she could do something in scale in braille, in case a totally blind child came to the program. She made a wonderful scale model of the Empire State Building in braille. Next to it she put a little house and a person so that a blind child could feel this building and feel how massive it is in relation to a house and to a child. The child could get a sense of "this is me, and this is the great big building next to me."

Now I am working on the summer reading program. It will be similar to the programs in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, where the children preregister. The libraries send out three or four books for the children to read and then keep telephone contact with them. I want to do it that way because I want to get to know some of these children and I want them to get to know me. It is all part of personalizing the service.

Some of the programs that I am planning for next fall might make day trips for the families. The State Museum here has marvelous programs. I am going to indicate that there is also a program at the State Museum. Then if the family wants to come but thinks that it is too long a trip to make for a visit to the library alone—and I do not want them to spend the whole day at the library, because that is not appealing either—they

can combine a couple of activities for a day trip. That is in the back of my mind as an encouragement, an inducement, for next year; I am sorry that I did not think of it this year.

Children's Newsletter

We are issuing a library newsletter geared specifically toward children. I have put out three issues this year and I may go to four issues next year. The name of the newsletter, *Rap Sheet*, came from one of the children. We had a contest at the beginning of the year to name the newsletter and the prize was a McDonald's dinner certificate. I included pictures in the newsletter, to personalize it for those children who can see. It is supposed to make our library seem a little bit more like their library. I make announcements in the newsletter and follow up on our programs. I also try to cover problem areas in my column.

This year I sent the newsletter to the children's homes, because I did not know of the working relationships of schools and the commission counselors. In a school setting with the commission counselors I might have been more successful in accomplishing what I wanted to with the newsletter. I do not want only to talk to children in the newsletter; I would like them to talk back to me, not only by writing letters, but by sending me things that they write or puzzles and other things that they do. I want to make the newsletter a vehicle in which they can express themselves in some way and share their expressions.

There is a need for that kind of thing, but I did not have much of a response, possibly because I was not aiming at where the child would be most receptive. Next year I intend to extend it to schools as well as homes.

The Book Collection

Turning to the subject of the book collection, I have to learn what is in the book collections for the children, so I am listening to the books now. I have heard complaints that the tapes are too slow. Some are slower than others, but the speed depends on the reader. In some situations they have chosen women to read books that men could have read better, and vice versa. Maybe women could do a better job reading picture-book materials. I find that men do not interest me when they read such books. I have recently been listening to a reader who is terrific with picture-book materials. I also like the way some readers change

their voices so that the listener can identify characters to some extent. And I do not find the pace of the reading too slow. In fact, I have been pleasantly surprised. I was not sure how I was going to react to the recordings and, in fact, suspected that I was not going to like the medium.

I find that I really have to listen to the books. I cannot do housework at the same time, although I may be able to sit next to the machine doing something with my hands, such as knitting. I listened to *Winds of War* on cassette while it was being presented on television. I was painting my living room and dining room while I listened and found that very hard to do. And that may be a point with children, too. They are so used to having a musical background with a narrative that they only tune in halfway, to either the music or the words. They think that they can do that with recorded books, too, but they really cannot. They have to give the books more attention. There may be a way of learning to read with your ears rather than with your eyes.

I believe that the tapes can encourage learning-disabled children to learn to read if the children listen at a level that is higher than the level at which they can read print. It does not make sense for a fifteen- or sixteen-year-old to read material on a second- and third-grade level. Such a young person can probably comprehend higher-level material very readily. And most learning-disabled children are extremely intelligent; they simply cannot learn the process of reading. I think these children are frustrated with reading because the level of what they are reading is always too low.

I am not sure that I am here to motivate children to read. I am simply trying to be helpful. I read an article in which the author said we are so concerned with the idea of reading that we do not really use the children's energy efficiently. If they are accomplishing something by listening to a tape and enjoy it, instead of frustrating them with print reading, why not just let them listen to the tape? The question is what our roles are. Four months ago I would have said that we needed more combination book and tape sets. Now I am not so sure.

The Future

If everything I read from the Commission for the Blind is true, the library soon will be asked to serve many blind children who are not intelligent. Many of the children whom we have been serving are of

average and above-average intelligence, but now we will be getting handicapped children who are also blind, and it seems that nine times out of ten the handicap is mental retardation. I do not know how we in the library are going to serve these children, frankly, but we are going to have to look at this problem if we are going to serve this community. Maybe we will have to face the fact that we cannot serve these children until they reach a certain level. Maybe there will be no materials that apply to the blind mentally retarded. That will have implications for the whole service in the long run. It will be interesting to see whether we will be building an adult readership of the future from the blind children.

There are differences between this service and public library service to children. The children we serve are spread over a larger area. And their handicaps, and their parents' handicaps, if they have them, work against them in dealing with the library. Because of the distances involved it is hard to do some of the things that we might want to do the same way that a public library does. I am talking specifically about programming, which becomes extremely difficult. Also, because of the distances involved, we do not usually have a one-to-one relationship between a librarian and a child. If we do, it is over the telephone, more likely than not, and that makes us a little more distant, a little less animate.

Yet another result of the distances involved is that the browsing aspect of other libraries is missing. Granted, children can choose from catalogs and consult *Talking Book Topics*, but that is not the same as being able to hold a book in one's hand and look at it to decide whether to read it. So the children's selection is limited and they generally leave it up to the librarian. That can be a guessing game, even within the purviews of the interests they have indicated. Of course, if the child starts listening and does not like the book, he or she may send it back to us. But that is still very different from being able to browse among ten or twenty books and pick one or two of those to take home to read. If we send a book home that the child does not like, it is two weeks before that child gets another one.

Since I have been here I have developed a strong feeling that this job is more than a job. It is an invaluable service. So I would like to make as many people aware of us as possible so that the children who might benefit from our program hear about it. I am not assuming that every child is going to benefit from it, but those who might should not fall between the cracks because of ignorance of the service.

VII. CONCLUSION

Many things in the world of print-handicapped children influence their responses to the programs of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Their world has been explored in the preceding interviews. This section presents some of the general conclusions I have drawn.

The Adults

Mothers were their children's best advocates, interested enough in their children to fight the system for them, when necessary, yet even these parents who are more familiar than most with NLS, reading, and libraries, needed more information to be effective in their advocate roles.

Parents' reading to their young print-handicapped children and involvement with the NLS program are strong factors that encourage a child to read and use braille and recorded materials. The mothers who were most involved in the reading lives of their children were concerned with reading as it affects academic achievement, rather than as a broadening recreational pursuit. Many more parents, though, are not so interested in their children's reading, or in NLS. Still other parents, though interested in other aspects of their children's lives, may be ignorant of the services offered by libraries for the blind and physically handicapped. These facts suggest that NLS should investigate how to make parents more aware of their programs and how to tailor these programs so children can use them as independently as possible. Parental noninvolvement should be assumed—although not with resignation—in development of materials and equipment and in planning programs. Libraries that offer information and referral services should better publicize these services, and libraries that do not have such services should provide them.

The *teachers* interviewed presented several points of view concerning education, reading, and print-handicapped children, while also pointing out the lack of standard definitions for certain disabilities in the school setting. Definitions are crucial, since librarians must trust the educators to test print-handicapped children and properly diagnose their disabilities. The current state of education described by university professors and special education teachers provides a vivid view of the priorities of teachers and administrators and explains why so many readers are

unaware of or not actively using the NLS services. Teachers also said that they wanted their handicapped students to be well rounded; they would rather have the children outside playing than inside listening to talking books.

Teachers, in most cases, are not aggressively seeking information about and promoting services that are supplemental to regular classroom work. Librarians must take the initiative in promoting the NLS program with these teachers, who are a vital link with the children. The interviewees made many specific recommendations for changing materials and equipment. At the same time they stressed the importance of communication between librarians and teachers and the importance of the promotion and publicity of the NLS program.

The child counselors were able to provide other views of the child-parent-library relationship and offered the strongest arguments for reconsidering the design of materials to make the library program more successful. One suggestion was to create books that use senses in addition to hearing, in formats that will excite children and invite their participation. The counselors also discussed other variables, including family poverty, parental guilt, child abuse, additional handicaps, emotional problems, and parent or teacher apathy, that explain handicapped children's lack of interest in NLS materials.

Reading specialists provided some background to current debates about teaching reading and additional clues about the reasons some children are not interested in reading. The significance of reading itself, as a shared human activity, was stressed, as was the important function of reading as a way of showing children more options in life. The most important point for librarians working with handicapped children to learn from these specialists is that the children—as a result of mainstreaming and adapted reading instruction materials—are generally in classrooms where reading instruction stands a good chance of being ineffectual and excitement about recreational reading is not conveyed to them. Most teachers are unaware of up-to-date children's books and recreational reading possibilities; the best cure for this lack of awareness is regular communication between librarians and teachers. Even if a handicapped child should catch the reading spirit in the existing environment, many of the child's peers will not, and peer pressure may determine outward interest in reading and libraries.

The small sample of librarians was not aware of many of the variables mentioned by the other professionals, although they could name the problems that immediately affect a handicapped child's library use, such as transportation, lack of relevant materials, and infrequent communication with the library. Despite their lack of information, these librarians were active and seemingly effective, in some areas, with their programs for handicapped children. They were successfully applying general librarian expertise to this special clientele.

Resources for children vary from state to state and within states, so the programs mentioned are by no means equal in commitment and effectiveness. They present different approaches to solving some—only some—of the problems facing librarians who want to serve handicapped children, and these approaches may be modified to work in other settings. In only one of the four libraries was the parent library's commitment of staff and resources enough to promise full, effective library service to blind and physically handicapped children, eventually.

The Children

The interviews present a picture of a very heterogeneous group of children with very different reading needs. Visually handicapped children are mainstreamed, for the most part, and are being exposed to the same educational pluses and minuses as the rest of the population, including a system of learning to read that does not actively encourage recreational reading. At the same time the visually handicapped children are either learning braille or using tapes and visual aids to learn classroom material. In all cases the effort required of the children is great. Because of the advent of the itinerant teacher and other developments in their field, special education teachers are not in a good position to lessen the academic burden of visually handicapped children. Their schoolwork is more time-consuming, is less rewarding, and stands a greater chance of being sabotaged than the work of sighted children who need not depend on readers, transcribers, and outside help. Visually handicapped children are also "bombarded" with new concepts and new equipment, which can be overwhelming even for the visually handicapped child of normal intelligence who has supportive school and family lives. It can be devastating for the multiply handicapped blind child or the child who lacks supportive school and home environments.

Children who are learning disabled, reading disabled, or neurologically impaired have different obstacles to overcome. One of those obstacles is getting parents and teachers to understand and accept their difficulties with reading and learning. Another is learning in an educational climate that is unstable, with experts who are still wrestling with the proper definition of their lack of reading ability. These children who have no obvious physical handicap must receive the information they need at the proper level and with an immediacy that maintains their motivation and self-esteem. They have this in common with the other children using NLS materials.

Multiply handicapped children and children whose physical handicaps do not allow them to hold a print book have long been using the same talking books as blind and visually handicapped children. The addition to the NLS program of the neurologically impaired and reading-disabled children requires another look at the materials offered. Now we see an added complexity: The range of abilities and special needs within each defined group seem to call for a greater diversification of library materials.

The only characteristics that remain constant throughout the population of juvenile borrowers are age and an inability to read print (though low-vision aids and computers are changing this situation to a degree). Like other children, they want to fit in and to do what other children who might not be handicapped are doing. They also have the primary needs for love, shelter, and sustenance, which are more important to them than reading, although reading may provide them with solace or clues for problem solving that may be helpful in handling their primary needs.

The auditory sense is the last to develop, and children's interest may lie more in tactile books than in talking books. Children respond to repetition and drama and need to have stories that serve *their* purposes, that help them make sense out of *their* lives, regardless of how young they are. If all indications are correct, print-handicapped children are not being well served by schools. They definitely are not being well served by their libraries.

Recommendations for the Future

It is obvious that there is a critical need for further study of the library needs of the print-handicapped juvenile population. Experts outside the library field are becoming interested in the reading problems of print-

handicapped children and experimenting with new materials. There is potential for great progress, if efforts can be coordinated. No other national institution has the expertise and eminence of NLS in this area. NLS should take a leading role in these investigations if it wants to promote a cohesive and effective program of reading development and library service for print-handicapped children, with a minimum of duplication and wasted effort.

A well-researched, well-tested reading program, with innovative materials, could not fail to reach the children it is intended for. Despite the lack of communication between librarians and teachers and, in some cases, the implied lack of trust, ground-breaking developments—some of which are suggested in this book—would be discussed and applied because the need for new approaches and new materials is so great. NLS already has a commitment to this population. It should further pursue this commitment, publicizing what is already offered while working to develop more effective materials, equipment, and programs.

The first step that these interviews demand is brainstorming, soon, with knowledgeable people who work more closely with handicapped children than librarians do. NLS staff and network librarians should listen to suggestions from these people and draw up a plan of research and development. Interviews suggest that the children require a wider variety of materials. If this fact is overwhelmingly reinforced by the brainstorming sessions, some prototype materials could be produced—new types of books with tactile-kinesthetic features and original writing for the visually impaired. These materials could then be tested in the network libraries that wish to participate.

This book contains many suggestions that network librarians, public librarians, teachers, and others may take to heart and begin implementing where they can.

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